Through The Forbidden Gates

and other stories

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Through The Forbidden Gates

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Those who pass through these Forbidden Gates will experience a delight that cannot be expressed in words. Therefore, this volume of prize tales which earned for The Black Cat, from which they are republished, the title "The Story-Telling Hit of the Age," needs no introduction.

Through the Forbidden Gates*

By CARROLL CARRINGTON

N the village to which I have been forced to retire I am never a very popular member of the circle which sits around the stove of winter evenings in the rear room of the cigar store and spins yarns into the haze of bad tobacco smoke; for, to tell you the truth, I never could see that there was much in a story which did not contain at least a couple of killings, one international complication, and a hero whom all the world might know — a fine public celebrity to whom it would be worth while knowing that something had befallen.

The little love adventures of Mary and John, the incidents which had dogged the heels of Bill since he ran away from Pumpkinville with his wardrobe at the end of a stick, the nocturnal escapades of the one lone prisoner in the hamlet jail — these things I could never see anything in, though my companions, I'll admit, never fail to discern their importance, nor to grow reminiscent over them far into the night, in a degree that is wonderfully ingenious, and likewise fatiguing.

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $200 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

Give me, I have always declared, the world for a stage and the nations for scenes; throw in a couple of oceans between the acts; involve an international conspiracy in the plot and a few royal names in the cast, disclose a mystery that will make the world shake in its shoes, instead of merely causing old Jerry Dillon to drag his boots off the stove-fender and say "Gosh!" Put in some good sword-fighting, with a king to defend or a princess to win — and there we shall have a story. That is the kind of a story I am going to tell you now — that is my idea of a real story — and I have never heard more than half a dozen that were worth the telling.

Of course, I am speaking of true stories — stories which seldom seem wonderful at all unless you know the people concerned.

It was while I was second lieutenant on the U. S. S. *Wisconsin* — I have since been retired at my urgent request, that I might hide away with my beautiful wife in this obscure village (which I have given a false name) — that I got my feet entangled in the curtain ropes, while nosing behind the scenes, of a drama that was altogether too big to be any business of mine, and came precious near being flung through the curtain as it fell, and thus exposing what was never meant to be seen at all by the world in front. The curtain came down, and the ropes were unwound from my feet, and here I am safe enough. But it is a condition of my telling you this story that you never repeat it in the hearing of a Chinaman. I am well enough hid, I believe, but you do not know the Chinese nation as I do; and while I cheerfully give you the facts as they befell, it may as well be remembered that there was never yet any good came of being wilfully reckless.

I was sitting in my cabin on the *Wisconsin* one evening as the vessel lay at anchor in Honolulu harbor, when my orderly came to the door with a card. I glanced at the card; then, in some surprise, at the orderly.

"A Chinaman?" I asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Did he mention any business?"

"Says he carries a letter of introduction from a mutual friend."

"A mutual friend — of myself and a Chinaman?" I tapped the card on the table. Clearly this was not San Francisco.

"But show him aboard," I said, finishing the reflection aloud. "In Honolulu it may be different."

In the Chinatown of the former city, where I had been a frequent visitor, I had observed that people either threw stones at the little yellow devils or turned them into servants and cursed them to their faces — but here in Honolulu was Lieutenant Manning, U. S. N., receiving an exquisitely engraved card and a message from one of them to the effect that a "mutual friend — "

He came in so softly that I should not have known that he was there if the orderly had not clattered for both of them. He was elaborately silked, combed and braided, and he carried about him all over an air of dignified repose which it may surprise you to hear brought my feet off a chair instantly and caused me to rise with a bow of civil greeting.

"Lieutenant Manning," he said, in perfect English, "I have the pleasure of presenting you with a note from one who says she is your friend."

"She!" I cried, taking the envelope from his outstretched hand. "Is the note from a lady?"

"A lady?" he repeated. "Why, yes; a very charming one." Then he gracefully seated himself in a chair at the opposite side of the table, signed that the orderly might close the cabin door, and waited for me to read.

I still have that letter, and here it is:

> My dear Lieutenant: — I am sure you will be surprised to receive a letter from one signing herself a friend who has known you scarcely two days; but we were certainly such good friends during that little while that I feel assured you will not deny me a favor so soon, if I ask it.
>
> I am introducing Mr. Chin Fuey to you for a very great purpose. He will ask you to do things which may seem strange to you, and they will be dangerous, too; but I want you to do them. I think you are just the one who can — it may be the only one — as you have the discretion and courage and strength that will be necessary. I have studied you, you see. You may trust Mr. Fuey. He has a tremendous secret on his hands — a secret that would shake the world if it got out now, and perhaps cause a terrible war. Through you it may be saved entirely, and only the immediate principals be any the wiser. I am trembling as I write, for I am in the awful secret myself, through no fault of my own. You must get me out of it — I implore you to do as Mr. Fuey asks you. When you return, if you ever do — which God grant! else we shall all be destroyed — when you return to Honolulu, come and ask what you will from
>
> The Woman in Yellow.

I felt the Chinaman's eyes on my face as I finished reading — felt them keenly — but when I looked up at him he was absently regarding a bracelet on his right wrist. I folded the letter, put it calmly enough into the envelope (it has always been a mystery to me how I do these things), and tucked it into my pocket as though it had been an invitation to an afternoon tea.

As a matter of fact, aside from the whirl that my head was in over the weirdness of the communication, I did not know who the writer of it was. I recalled the "Woman in Yellow" quickly enough — I had danced with her all last night and dreamed of her all of the present day — but even then I was ignorant of her name. She had never unmasked. I must have met her before the ball, if she had known me two days, as she claimed — but where? I was trying to think without appearing at all concerned, when the voice of my visitor arrested me.

"I accept you," he said — and I fancied there was relief and a good deal of hope in his tone — "I will trust you, and will stake our lives on the hazard."

"The devil you will!" I exclaimed; "but who said I would accept you?"

"I was watching you as you read that letter. It was the test I told the writer I would abide by. If you did not start and betray the emotions which it certainly roused in you, you were the man I wanted for coolness and self-possession. If, on the other hand, you had displayed excitement, or even unusual interest in your face, I should very soon have bidden you good evening."

"And so you may yet," I retorted, "unless you get speedily to the point of your visit."

"That is not so quickly done," said he, "nor can I afford the time, if you can, for explaining matters, until I am first assured that you will accept the commission I would impose on you."

"Let it be nothing unbecoming to a gentleman and an officer," I said with a frown, "and the bargain is more than half struck. But, to digress for an instant, I will ask you to freshen my memory upon a question which, being a resident of Honolulu, you may be in the way of answering. I cannot recall the name of —"

"If you will pardon me, Lieutenant," came the Chinaman's smooth voice, interrupting, "it is unlikely that I could refresh

your memory with any name whatever, since we are strangers and the only third party in our acquaintance is the lady whose letter of course speaks for her much more warrantably than it would become me to do."

If he saw the bafflement in my eyes, the effect was only to increase his respectful courtesy. Replying to my stiff bow in acknowledgment of his last words, he proceeded:

"You are going to China?"

"Yes."

"You will be near Pekin."

"As near as a vessel can get."

He drummed with his long nails on the table a moment.

"What a pity it can't get any nearer!" he muttered grimly. "When our precious royal traitors in the Forbidden City throw the old empire to the dogs like a dish of scraps, the United States will be among those waiting at the water's edge to fight over the division — and a snapping, snarling, smoke-clouded roar of a fight it will be!" Then, throwing off this momentary bitterness, he continued: "But we will take things in their proper order. It is Pekin that I am aiming at, too — Pekin, the Forbidden City, which China's own people never see the inside of. I want you to go to Pekin for me on a very perilous mission. You will endanger not only your life but your position in the American navy, which I fancy you think the more of. Now, please," putting up his hand gracefully, as I would have spoken — "please remember that I have assured you it is something a gentleman and an officer may do with honor — and even with pride."

"Then out with it!" I demanded. "And let me get one thing at least fixed in my mind. What with all this talk of dreadful secrets, Forbidden Cities, perilous missions, women in yellow — but I beg your pardon; you did not — "

He coughed politely behind his jewelled hand.

"No," he replied. "I did not mention any woman in yellow."

"But the whole thing is too damned mysterious!" I cried, losing patience. "Come, man, I am waiting for the story."

"I will tell you first a little story of Pekin — a story which few white men ever hear correctly. China is ruled by a small band of Manchurian Tartars, who conquered us in the early days when

they were a brave and warlike people. Now they are degenerate with dissipation. They are abandoned to a life of profligacy and idleness, while China stagnates for the want of legislation. They have kept the empire at a standstill for centuries. The people of China obey them because it has been in their religion for five thousand years to obey without question the voice from the throne, whosoever it might be. Just now this voice is a woman's. Some years ago she was a concubine of the palace — nothing more. A son was born to her. A son was born also to the Empress. It was feared that the illegitimate prince might supplant the real one, and the Empress asked that both he and his mother be removed. The world has seen how they were removed; the Emperor himself and then the Empress were spirited away, and the concubine was proclaimed Dowager Empress, with the nine-year-old prince and her own child sharing the palace with her as the 'Royal Family.' Inside the main city of Pekin, which is like any other Chinese city, is a smaller city, barricaded and barred. Within live the Tartar tyrants. They will not see us; they will not speak to us. Always until now we have had the right to petition the Royal Court for legislation; but the Dowager has taken even that scant privilege away from us. They discourage road making, so that the city will be kept inaccessible to travellers from a distance. As it was a thousand years ago, so it is to-day — held suspended in the grasp of poetry; for those who should be making laws for us are sunk in a perpetual revel of rhapsody."

"Is not Pekin accessible by rail?"

"Within the present year one little line has been opened to Tien-Tsin — that is all."

"How about the telegraph?"

He drew a paper from his sleeve and said, "Read that."

I read the following message:

Form No. 101. Western Union Telegraph Office,
San Francisco, Feb. 18, 18—.

Mr. T. E. Black:

Your dispatch dated Feb. 17th to Tsung Li Yamen is undelivered. Reason — Was stopped at Shanghai by Chinese Government authorities because dangerous to security of state.

"A," Receiver W. U. Co.

"It was a message written in Honolulu by a powerful Chinese society and sent by mail to San Francisco for transmission by cable

to the Forbidden City. It was a petition to the Royal Court — and you see how it fared," said my visitor.

"Why don't you tackle them in some other way — with a balloon, for instance?" I asked, lightly.

"We have done so — with an airship," he replied, calmly.

I stared at him. "You have?" I cried.

"Do you remember," he said, "of hearing of an airship competition held in San Francisco last year under the direction of one of the newspapers — at which a man named Stanley turned out a machine that would actually fly? And do you remember that as soon as it was discovered, and was on the point of creating a sensation, it suddenly disappeared?"

"I recall something of the incident."

"Well, the world lost a prize for which it had been waiting for a hundred years, and I gained it. It was a Chinese secret organization that swallowed up your airship, through your humble servant." He bowed, then his face underwent a remarkable change and he sprang to his feet. "It was accurst!" he cried — "accurst with a thousand devils! It brought us ruin; there was evil in every line of it, and it mocked us when it had us damned and broken under its foul trickery! We had it built on an island here and we took it to China. We flew straight to the Forbidden City, gloriously indifferent alike to bad roads and to Sacred Walls. We landed squarely on the very palace itself. The whole city fell on its face, even the bold Tartars quivering in the dust with the rest. Then we came away.

"I cannot tell you what we did in the Forbidden City; suffice that we made an awful mistake, and instead of striking a blow for the salvation of our country, we committed a hideous error — an error which may result in its speedier ruin. When we discovered this we fell upon the evil monster that had tricked us, and beat and burnt it until not a vestige remained. But that did not right the wrong we had done, nor is it in the power of any Chinaman to do so without losing his life in the undertaking."

"I see," I said, "and you wish me to right it for you?"

"Precisely," was his reply. "And unless you can do it, I say to you again that my country is forever robbed of the one hope it had for salvation before we took it away."

"And you think I can do all this?"

"I think you can, else you may be sure I would never trust the matter and all our lives in your hands. And now good-night," he said, abruptly rising and holding out his hand — "to-morrow afternoon, an hour before you sail, I will bring to you a paper which I pray to your God and mine you will get safely delivered into the Forbidden City. In the meantime remember all I have told you of the eyes which gleam through the Sacred Walls six thousand miles away, and be as careful of your countenance as though you saw them actually looking at you right across the table, even as I am looking at you now."

I raised my eyes sharply and looked across the cabin into darkness — the Chinaman had disappeared.

He came aboard next day at the appointed time, and was in my cabin with the door shut behind him before I had heard the sound of his coming. He had with him a little Chinese boy.

"Lieutenant," he said, "this boy will be your companion to the Forbidden City. He will be your servant, interpreter and guide. You cannot do better than to keep him constantly near you. Here, also, is something that you should not part with, day or night, while you are away" — and he handed me a long, slim object, wrapped in silk cloth — "and, finally, here is the memorial which you are to present to the Empress Dowager. Should she demand of you personal proof of what it contains, you will repeat these words: 'The Flying Devil can never visit the Sacred City again, for I myself have seen where it was destroyed by Your Majesty's loyal subjects in a far-off island. Believe in them, Your Majesty, smile with favor on them, and the Flying Devil will never bother you again.' After that you will do well to leave Pekin as speedily as possible — and no more can I tell you."

"But here?" I said, holding up the long parcel.

"It is a sword," he replied; "and there are only ten like it in the world. In China you may kill whom you please with it under the absolute protection of the Royal Court. The possessor of it is exempt from the law, and can slay without question or hindrance. In most cases the bare sight of it is enough to disperse a mob; and the boldest Chinese noble will tremble when it is unsheathed. Keep it always; keep the boy always near you;

and remember the memorial. This bag contains an incidental element of your equipment." He rolled a leather sack from his sleeve. Then he held out his hand.

"I will leave you now, Lieutenant," he said, looking me steadily in the eyes; and I fancied the steadiness of the glance was meant to hide the quaver of his voice, which I now detected for the first time. "You are a brave man, and a reckless one — but you are cool, too, and that is better than all. My life is in your hands — mine and many others — and something infinitely greater than our lives, which I cannot explain to you now. If you find it out you must still trust me and go right ahead without wavering. And now good-bye — good-bye."

With his face turned away from me, he wrung my hand; then in an instant he had fallen to his knees and mumbled something in Chinese in a low voice. The next moment he was on his feet again — and a moment later he was gone.

The Chinese boy stood stock still and stared into vacancy, with all the air of one who was left utterly alone. I commended him to his thoughts while I examined into the bag on the table and counted the money it contained — a matter it is never well to neglect. There were ninety-nine thousand dollars in paper and one thousand dollars in gold. This was the "incidental element" of my equipment! I next unsheathed the magic sword (about which I had read, by the way) and saw that it was of gold, set with precious stones. While I was gazing at it I caught the Chinese boy's eyes on my face. He looked away again, but returned the glance when he thought I had ceased to regard him; then he pretended to look out of the window.

"Come here, Hop-o'-my-Thumb," I said, finally, "and get acquainted. What is your name?"

He whirled about, seemed to catch himself in too hasty a movement, let the sudden animation die away, and approached me with a step which was ostentatiously respectful, but which I could swear was without the least timidity or humility.

"My name," he said, in easy English; "well, the lady called me Woe Me."

"Woe Me, eh? And what lady called you that?"

"She in whose house I worked in Honolulu."

"So you have been a house servant, have you?"

He gazed at me curiously before replying, with his lips drawn tight against his teeth.

"Yes," he said, "that is what I have been."

"Well, you seem a likely enough shaver. I guess you can hit it off with me all right, can't you? I shan't want you to do a great deal — in fact, you may do about as you please — only just hang around the cabin here and keep out of the other men's way. Things will be quiet until we get to Chifu. Then you are to show me the way to Pekin, and talk Chinese for me to those at the gates. Are you afraid of the Forbidden City?"

"No."

"Bully for you, then," I said; "for, to tell you the truth I am, after listening to our friend Mr. Fuey for an evening."

"Chin Fuey is a fool."

Contempt and indifference were in the boy's face as he delivered himself of his observation. I stared at him with such amazement that he turned abruptly away and betook himself to the window. I had to put him down as a homesick little duffer, who would have time to improve his temper on the way over; and with this conclusion I left him, after stowing away the various articles which the elder Chinaman had confided to my care.

Gradually the lad did burnish up his lights as we left Honolulu. He had a preternaturally grave expression for his years, and something furtive in his eyes which kept him ever a stranger to me, though on the surface he smiled at my advances and made me understand that he appreciated my sociable intentions. He frequently made a show of waiting on me, especially if any of the other officers were around; but he did this with an awkwardness that never failed to make me smile, and then to scratch my head in puzzled reflection for a half hour afterwards. He seemed best contented when left alone to gaze from my cabin window out over the water toward the west; and whenever I could catch a glimpse of his face at such times I discovered on it a look of mature exaltation which lingered in my mind for hours thereafter, and transformed the boy's personality entirely. But always as soon as I talked with him he changed back into the stolid Oriental child again, who was willing to blacken my boots if I asked him, or

listen at my knees with patient attention while I read aloud from one of Stevenson's novels. And in this latter occupation we passed much of the time between Honolulu and Chifu, only one incident arising to shake the even tenor of the voyage.

This occurred one morning while I was on duty in another part of the vessel. The first I knew of it was when I returned to the cabin and found the ship's Chinese cook lying face downward on the floor, and my Chinese boy standing very stiff at his head and giving the prostate man one of his feet for a pillow.

"Here!" I cried, "what's the row now?"

I sprang into the room, caught the heathen by the loose of the clothes and pitched him out of the door. The boy fell back, flushed angrily and seemed on the point of striking me — and then I saw that he had the fatal sword in his hand. But he caught himself almost instantly, dropped his chin on his breast and sat down in a chair behind the table.

"Come, Woe Me," I said, wonderingly, "what the devil were you doing to that Chinaman? And how came he here in my cabin, where he was never known to have any business?"

"I know not why the dog came in," said the boy, sullenly. "A little more and I had killed him for it."

"But he came to see you," I said.

"Then he had better not come again," was the reply. "I found the slave looking in at the door with a laugh on his face as though I — *I* —" and he stamped his foot and sprang up from the chair — "were to be the plaything of any coolie swine that chanced along. You may see in your mind his prostration when I spoke to him — just three words — and showed him the hilt of the sword. Ugh!" — and he ground his teeth — "I will have a prize offered for the inventing of a death which it were suitable such a beast should die."

Now here was a fine play of airs, quotha! "And who are you to be babbling of prizes and killings?" I demanded. "Let us come to our senses and send the heathen cook back to his pots and pans, to which I will assist him with a boot if ever he comes so near to me again."

We reached Chifu in due season and I had no difficulty in securing a leave of absence for ten days. Putting the sword in

my scabbard, the memorial inside my shirt, and the money in my several pockets, I took Woe Me by the hand and boldly set foot on Chinese soil.

I could not help thinking, as I let this small guide lead me in search of a conveyance, that I was a precious fool for my pains; and I looked back once at the white warship lying so big and secure out there in the water and felt that here was nothing short of sheer madness, my leaving it behind me to plunge off alone into a wilderness of pagans, to knock at the gates of the Tartar dragons, to risk bringing all of China swarming about my ears and perhaps stirring up an international mess that would draw my own country's foot into it and cause my name to be damned down the ages as my body was likely to be kicked down the Sacred Palace stairs.

But somehow, as I gazed, a flutter of yellow grew upon the deck of the warship and the beautiful form of a woman filled into it like a swelling bud, which bloomed upon my senses so that when I shut my eyes I could feel the fulness of it in my arms and the fragrance of it upon my cheek, as I had held it in the dance of the masqueraders at the Honolulu ball. And although I was never what any one could call a sentimental man, I will say right here that the ability to see visions comes once into the life of every man living, and when it came to me out there on the Chifu dock I took it that my time had arrived to be a fool, and there was an end of reason until I was over it.

So the Woman in Yellow beckoned me to go on, and I went on.

The youngster secured two donkeys and drivers and got us started out on an evil little trail, himself riding in front and maintaining a fine silence. I wondered if he knew what we were going for, or if he had any idea of it. He had never asked me any questions, and of course I had never asked any of him, preferring in any event that a man, and an officer at that, should never have to go to a child for information about his own business. He was my guide, and I would let him do all the guiding he pleased to, and with all the fine airs he might choose to put into it, since doubtless his young heart found a relish in the importance of the responsibility — and with these reflections I resigned myself to the dull landscape and the task of keeping awake.

Late in the afternoon, as we drew near a town, Woe Me came back to me and spoke.

"We will go faster, if you please," he said. "I like not the looks of the scenery."

"What's the matter with the scenery?"

"I saw a bush that was alive," was his impassive response. "We will get some coolies here and make them run with us."

He had them engaged as soon as we struck the village, and we were out upon the road at a run in a little while. Thence we made a lively dash of it and travelled far into the night before halting for repose.

"Do you see any more live bushes?" I asked Woe Me the next morning, after we were on the road again.

"My eyes are tired with looking," he replied, "and I save them for the morrow."

"What shall we see on the morrow?"

"The Forbidden City."

This was well enough, and I said no more. Nor did any adventure befall us until, on the following day, we ran into the outer city of Pekin and pattered through its suburbs toward the Sacred Walls.

It was here that Woe Me made his coolies fall back so that his chair was alongside my own and by reaching out his hand he could touch me. He gave me an inscrutable glance out of his grave eyes, as much as to ask if I were ready for what might come; inspected my person from head to heel; placed his hand on his hip, as if in a reminder; once more looked me in the face and then impulsively held out his hand.

"You have been good to me," he said, simply. "I will save you if I can. Come on."

You may try to imagine my feelings as the coolies swung into a fast run again and bore us rapidly to the end of our journey.

"The gates," I heard the boy mutter, and he craned his neck forward; then he swept the neighborhood with an eagle's glance and brought up with a sharp eye on my face once more.

"They are closing in on you," he said, in a voice that startled me by a mysterious change it had taken — for it was now that of a stranger, who was yet a friend, but whose quarrel was not mine, nor mine his, and who could see the fight only as a bystander.

Yet there was an authority and strength in the tone which rang a confidence into me, and made me grip my sword with a very demon's strength and fury.

"Let them come, then!" I cried, springing out of my chair. "Let them come, and they'll need all their wooden gods to help the first dozen that reach me!"

I saw a hundred Mongolians closing ahead of me as I ran for the great gates. It did not occur to me then to wonder how they had found me out. I had expected trouble, and here it was; and that was all I could grasp at the moment. Forward I plunged into their very faces before the situation took any definite form at all — then in a flash, right there ahead of me, I saw a face that I knew, the face of the Chinese cook on the *Wisconsin!* He pointed at me, jabbering excitedly, and motioning the mob to close in. My mind, strangly enough, cleared at the sight of his treacherous features. By the time the ringleaders of the mob reached me I was in that superb command of myself which makes an American officer the match of any hundred savages alive. Right and left I struck with a most beautiful swinging stroke, till a half-circle was cleared before me in a twinkling, and carpeted with as many as eight or nine of the coolies woven in a squirming heap.

"So," I cried, tapping my yellow gentleman of the ship's kitchen on the head as he lay gasping up at me in the temporary lull. "Here is a fine piece of business, your trying to mob an officer of the ship! What do you mean by it, you son of moon-eyed evil?"

His answer was as unexpected as it was disastrous. He reached out suddenly, caught me by the foot, and jerked me to the ground, where in an instant I was set upon and nearly smothered by a score of my foes. Here would have been the end of me in another second, had not things changed in a startling and magical way.

"Dogs!" I heard a voice ring out — then a thunderous command in the Chinese tongue, followed by the twang of a sword. I felt the Mongolians pile off me as though they were lifted by the hair by some great hand from above. Springing erect, I met an astonishing sight. Every mother's son of a coolie was lying flat on his face, while my little Chinese guide stood on a hillock near the big gates and looked down upon them.

"Dogs!" he said again in English — it was a word he was fonder of in that tongue than in his own. "Come here, you that they call the Lieutenant."

I stepped over the backs of about twenty Chinamen and approached him speechless. He handed me back the sword I had lost.

"I could not let you be killed before my eyes," he said. "But you must go now back to your ship. These slaves will go with you, and — " lifting his voice so that the ship's cook might hear — "if any harm comes to you not one of them shall remain alive to see another sun, nor shall his brothers, nor his sisters, nor his children, nor his parents, nor any one of his people many times removed. As for you," went on the speaker, in a lower tone, while the coolies lay as motionless as the dead, "as for you, my friend, you have been deceived long enough. The game is over now, or will be as soon as these gates open, and I shall never see you again. It did not end as I could have wished — I wanted you to deliver the memorial and go undeceived away — but now that is spoiled, and I may tell you that the memorial is worthless. And so, good-bye, for you must go quickly."

"But you?" I exclaimed.

"I stay here," he said.

"Chin Fuey said nothing of this!" I cried; "and the lady — the lady in yellow — I — "

"Chin Fuey made one great mistake, as he told you," the boy interrupted. "He has now rectified it as far as he could, thanks to you."

"And this terrible danger he feared?"

"Is past."

I could not understand it. Either my guide or myself had gone stark mad in the recent bad doings; and when I looked at the coolies lying prone on their faces at our feet I concluded that it must have been myself.

"You may keep my sword," were my companion's next words; "for you are not yet safe yourself. And here is a card which I promised a lady in Honolulu I would give you if ever I should stand with you before the gates of the Forbidden City, as I am standing now. Again I thank you — "

Suddenly the big gates swung back, and two richly dressed Chinese priests stood in the opening. No sooner had they seen my companion than they gave a great start, threw up their hands in the wildest terror and fell to their knees trembling. The boy spoke to them in Chinese. Slowly intelligence came back into their faces and they arose.

"Be careful," I heard the boy whisper in English. "Use your sword if necessary."

There followed a lively palaver between the first of the priests and my little companion, while the other Celestial kept his eyes on me in a way I did not like. Evidently the talk was about me, and it grew louder and more violent until the boy went straight up to his man and waved a hand in his face. The man hesitated, the boy's eyes flashed, the big one's knees gave way and down he sank in an attitude of submission. His eyes caught mine, though, and snapped spitefully in an outlet of chagrin over his defeat. Quick as a flash the other priest, at a signal, sprang at me with a whirling sword, which I barely had time to catch on my own; and in a trice we were fighting like two tigers.

He wielded no mean blade, did this Mongolian, having been nursed in a cradle of preparation for the royal guard. Clash upon clash we dealt, using the slashing blow, which promised a speedier result if it did strike short of skill on the other hand. And it was my superior strength which presently told on him by this reckoning; for in the time you could count ten I had beaten over his guard and caught him a full sweep fair on the neck; and down he went in two pieces as clean cut as a sliced carrot. Instantly the other priest was on his feet, with a whistle to his lips, but I jammed the hilt of the sacred sword in his face and leapt past him to the boy, who was beckoning me.

"Run!" he said. "Good-bye — you have done as a brave man should. Now go — and go as fast as you can."

He shouted something in Chinese, at which all the prostrate coolies sprang to their feet and formed a guard around me. And so, leaving my strange little guide standing in the royal gateway, with the richly robed priest kneeling at his feet, I set out on my return to Chifu.

. . . . . .

Six months later the *Wisconsin* dropped anchor in Honolulu harbor. I went straightway to the address written on the card which the Chinese boy had given me, and was ushered into an American drawing-room. The skirt of a woman's gown brushed the threshold, and before me stood — the Woman in Yellow.

"I was expecting you, Lieutenant," she said, giving me her hands, "and so you have really come back, after entering the gates of — shall I say the awful word? — and performing a deed that few men could have done, and no man will ever have the chance to do again."

"Madam," I said, trying to look through her mask — for she had put it on with the rest of the costume especially for my reception — "your words are as meaningless to me now as they were six months ago, when I was setting out on this wild-goose chase you are pleased to make so much of. So far as I can see, I have done nothing but make a fool of myself, and how I escaped getting killed as I deserved is not the least part of the mystery. But I have gone through with it, as you see, and here I am back in Honolulu to claim what I may from the Woman in Yellow — which I believe were the terms of our contract."

When I had finished I felt her trembling and saw the white of her neck and shoulders turn pink clear up to the yellow mask.

"And what will you claim?" she asked in a very small voice. But before I could answer, she had snatched one of her hands loose and placed it protestingly against my breast. "No," she said, "not yet. Tell me first about my Chinese boy. You did not bring him back; then how can I live up to my side of the bargain?"

"It was no such bargain," I exclaimed, taking her hand again, "and you are but putting me off. Why do you call him your Chinese boy?"

"He was my house servant," she said; "my Woe Me."

"Oho! Was he?" I rejoined, "And where did you get him?"

"Mr. Fuey brought him from China in an airship," was her reply, "and gave him to me for a servant while in Honolulu."

"Brought him in an airship!" I repeated, light breaking in upon me. "So it was he that they stole in the Forbidden City in their 'flying devil'?"

"Yes, they mistook him for another boy."

"For the son of the Dowager Empress, I'll be bound!"

"Yes."

"And this boy I took back to China was —?"

"The Emperor of China himself!"

After a dazed moment I asked her how she knew all this.

"Chin Fuey had to hide the boy somewhere away from Chinatown," she said, "and had to have friends aside from his own people to help him out of his trouble. He is an old friend of my father, and he chose us to be his confidantes and advisers. You know the rest — especially how I secured an escort for his little Chinese Majesty across the ocean."

"And how dare you confess all these secrets to me now," I demanded, still holding her, "since you would not six months ago?"

"Because you have come back," she whispered — "and I know what you came back for."

"What?"

"For me," she said, audaciously.

"Isn't it about time for you to take off that mask?"

"I'm afraid."

"Why?"

"Because they say in Honolulu that I am — am — rather pretty, you know — and —"

"Well?"

"And I'm afraid you might — kiss me."

"That I certainly shall do," I cried, "if what they say in Honolulu is but half true. Take off the mask!"

She took it off, and — well, if ever you chance to come to my village and see a retired naval officer and his wife sitting at twilight on the piazza of a cozy country mansion, you may judge for yourself about Honolulu's idea of beauty.

Margaret Kelly's Wake.*

BY S. C. BREAN.— (C. E. BARNS.)

THE white-capped nurse bent over the railing between the two tall globes. "Margaret Kelly, Ward 29, is dead," she said softly. Before the official in blue she laid the usual slip, and then glided away like a phantom.

Acting Superintendent Rickard glanced up at the clock high on the whitewashed wall at his left. It lacked twelve minutes of midnight. Mechanically he drew from a drawer some black-bordered blanks and turned to the ledger.

It was a plain ambulance case. The woman had been picked up unconscious in a West-Side alley three nights before. She was, apparently, one of that vast sweep of human driftwood which ebbs and flows through a great metropolis, leaving no trace. "Tim," he called out to the sleepy attendant bunched up in the corner. "Go down into the property-room and see if among the effects of Margaret Kelly, Ward 29, there is anything by which we can identify her."

"Right, sor," yawned the Dublinite, shuffling along the tiling and down into the lower quarters of Bellevue's mazes.

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $500 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

Tim soon returned. Quite triumphantly he laid before his principal three letters, a bank's certificate of deposit for no mean sum, and two receipted bills — all bearing the name, "Margaret Kelly, West Thirty-third Street." The official glanced them over, making copious notes. It was not often that he so misjudged a common ambulance case. Out of the aggregation the superintendent secured five city addresses.

By the first morning's mail five friends and relatives of the late Margaret Kelly received the shocking tidings of her untimely demise, and each apprised five and twenty more. By ten o'clock there were gathered together in those three quaint rooms in the very heart of "Hell's Kitchen" where Margaret Kelly, spinster, had lived her narrow and solitary life, no less than forty persons more or less near and dear to the deceased, falling upon one another's necks, sobbing — but with one eye open to prospective loot and the other vigilantly fastened upon the co-heirs.

For, be it known, "M's Kelly" had long been recognized as the richest woman in that whole thickly-tenemented block, as well as the most locally famous character. She was the only one of ten children who had never married. They often affirmed that there was a romance in the case concerning a gallant young countryman, who, after a strange misunderstanding, fled to Australia.

Certain it was that years ago Margaret had renounced the roseate sphere of matrimony for the fatter-pursed one of parsimony. With an amazing faculty for making money and a still more remarkable talent for saving it, she became the envy of her poverty-burdened sisters and the idol of multitudinous nephews and nieces, who more than once fell to warring over her favors. Moreover, Margaret was of a muscular mould which had won for her the sobriquet "the Amazon of Hell's Kitchen," with a tongue that wielded a lash of blue flame in righteous wrath, and a fighting valor in local inter-tenement warfare that made her highly respected, to say the least.

And yet, with all her disillusions of the heart, with all privation and trained avarice, Margaret was blessed with a big Irish heart upon which all her blood relatives pulled a close string. Many is the kinsman saved from actual dispossession, shipped back to the dear old Emerald Isle to die, or whose children were married or

buried at Margaret's expense — even though these bounties narrowed her down to a bread-and-tea diet for weeks to right her conscience and recoup her purse.

How glowingly now were recounted these manifold good deeds! What tender reminiscences and grateful benedictions! Yet how deeper than all was the impatience of the heirs to discover the exact extent of those mysterious possessions before which Death had at last lifted the veil! Hours of delicious sorrow and melting eulogy concealed a killing impatience to get down to business.

It was "Longshoreman Mike," the eldest of the nearest of kin, who took upon himself the office of chief of that clan of bandit mourners — bandits first and mourners afterward. Upon him devolved the task of breaking into chests, hampers and bureau-drawers, bringing forth secret treasures of silk, Irish lace, whitest linen and gowns that never saw the light save on St. Patrick's Day or at a wedding, passing these back to the weeping ones who properly gushed afresh over each discovery, apportioning them among themselves with self-righteous justice.

When five bankbooks were found in a bunch, there was the hush of the sepulchre till the exact aggregation was known; but when from the remote depths of a sheet-iron chest there was brought a brown woolen stocking so suspiciously heavy that the treasure-trover himself widened his eyes as he came forth to empty its contents upon the oilcloth table, there was excitement indeed. A stream of gold in the coin of many realms, to the count of twelve hundred dollars, lay before them. Every heart was fired with amazement as well as cupidity, the embarassment being relieved by Longshoreman Mike, who spoke with veritable inspiration:

"God's blessin' on the dear soul!" he sobbed, tossing the stocking into the coal-box. "Our dear Margaret must have the foinest funeral and the most glorious wake iver known in the Ward!"

"Roight and proper!" chimed in a chorus, while tears — not all of grief — coursed many a grimy furrow. Then Mike, the recognized head, was appointed to take care of "the yaller," to give the orders, and pay the price. "But moind now!" cautioned one, "a shtrict accounting to us all. We're all of one blood, saints save us! but business is business, even bechune rilatives!" With one hand on his heart and eyes uplifted to the vision of the winged

Margaret, Mike took the superfluous pledge. Then he proceeded to affairs of state.

It required the remainder of the day. The orders prepaid to undertaker, caterer, florist and corner liquor dealer were such as to give "Hell's Kitchen" shortness of breath. It even put to shame the New Year's feasts of the Ward Heelers' Club, already locally classic. On the following morning, then, all arrayed in their finest, the forty mourners left the tradesmen in the three little rooms to complete their tasks, and, with hearse in state, started, nine carriages strong, toward Bellevue.

There the first shudder awaited them. They were informed that the body of their dear Margaret had been conveyed to the morgue — that sombre pile on the edge of East River. Thither they repaired, with many groanings.

The interior of that structure resembles a safety-deposit vault under a clear dome. A hundred small steel doors close upon the row on row of separate graves of unknown and pauper dead. Morgue-Keeper Fane met the solemn concourse in the tiled corridor. He learned their mission and then led them, all shuddering and huddled with horror, through the great gates and down half-way along the bleak rows, halting before a door whereon was seen a card slipped behind a tiny pane, the name of the occupant pen-printed upon it.

The mourners shrivelled nearer, jamming their kerchiefs into their mouths, breathless in silence. The door swung wide. Seizing the sliding litter, the morgue-keeper drew it half-way out, disclosing the upper half of its lifeless burden, and stood gazing into the semicircle of expressionless faces about him.

There was no chorus of wails, no fainting, no tearing of hair. Instead, it was Mike who broke the appalling spell with a gulp of protest. "Look 'ere — m' Gawd!" he choked. "Thot ain't Margaret Kelly, you blunderin' idjit — "

"Isn't it, though?" rebuked the custodian, re-examining the card.

"Naw!" came back the rebuff, with the reinforcement of clenched fists shaken menacingly, for Mike had sampled the stock of the wake quite to the fighting point. "Thot ain't our Margaret. Why, sor, if anny livin' man were to tell the corpse

of the rale Margaret Kelly that she looked the loikes o' that, she'd rise up off that slab and break his face, so she would. Our Margaret Kelly, sir, was six foot one, and ivery inch a leddy!"

A volley of reinforcing protest supplemented this family columbiad delivered with such proud gusto. The morgue-keeper pushed back the litter, closed the door and fled to the telephone in his private office. "Superintendent," he said, calling up Bellevue, "the friends of the late Margaret Kelly, whose body was brought down here last night, fail to identify. There is a mistake somewhere."

"Hold the wire," came the anxious answer.

Down into the property-room the superintendent hastened on a tour of investigation. He returned a few minutes later, his face blazing. "Tim," he growled out to the sleepy attendant in the corner, "you are discharged!" Then over the 'phone again, "It was all the fault of my blundering help here," he said. "He gave me the wrong documents out of the property-room. You see, there were *two* Margaret Kellys: One an unknown, Ward 29; the other, Margaret Kelly, of West Thirty-third Street, Ward 31. You've got the unknown down there. The other was just discharged fifteen minutes ago, alive and well. Break the good news to the mourners, with apologies, et cetera. Good-bye!"

Joyously the morgue-keeper conveyed the glad tidings to the assembled forty. They stood still in mute amazement, with dry eyes and limp jaws, literally frozen to the stone tiling. "Good Gawd, mon! Y' don't really mane to tell me that Margaret Kelly's aloive —"

"Precisely, sir."

"Howly Mither!" And Mike felt his soul ooze out of his shoes. To face Margaret Kelly dead were disagreeable enough, but to face her alive now — the very thought drove him into the corner, where he took six fingers of liquid reinforcement at a gulp and tossed the flask through the rear door into the river. As there were murmurs of a lynching, Morgue-Keeper Fane retreated into the autopsy room.

Meanwhile a most impressive personage alighted from a Seventh Avenue car at the Thirty-Third Street corner and started westward. As she turned into her familiar doorway, a bevy of little children uttered a combined shriek and ran pell-mell into hiding. In the

gloom of the first landing she greeted an old friend, who immediately threw up her hands and fell in a dead faint. By the time she had reached her own apartments on the third floor, the newcomer was in a mood for any surprises.

She found plenty of them. The caterer was uncovering a big frosted cake, the florist was banking the mantel with white roses and the liquor dealer was setting up a miniature gin-mill in the corner cupboard. At the threshold the intruder paused, her face blank as a bluestone image, her shoulders thrown back and knuckles dug deep into her ribs. Finally she found voice:

"Oh ho, now!" she droned. "An' what's all this? A weddin'?"

The man in the white apron gave her a glance of contempt over his rampart of bottles. "Weddin' nothing," he snarled. "Can't yer see it's a funer'l?"

The woman's keen eyes blinked. A hideous smile played over the bloodless lips. "Railly now — a funer'l! I niver would have known it." Then with bitter sarcasm, "Do y' moind tellin' me whose funeral it is?"

"Why, poor old Margaret Kelly's funeral, o' course."

The newcomer strained up on her very tiptoes with gathering scorn, the unkempt feathers upon her grizzled head brushing the door-frame above. "The divvil it is!" she groaned, taking a forward step and clenching her big red fists. "An' do y' moind tellin' me who's goin' to pay for Margaret Kelly's funeral?"

The man in the apron gave a shrug. "Oh, don't *you* worry," he said. "It's all paid for."

The frame of a giantess swelled like a thundercloud. "With whose money, you young blackguard — with whose money?"

The man pointed to the rifled iron chest in the corner. "To be sure, with Margaret Kelly's money — whose else?"

He might have said more, but the Nemesis of "Hell's Kitchen" was upon him in an instant, and riot began. There were wailings and tearing of hair, the woman supplying the wailings, the men the hair. "Out with y', dogs, brutes, varmin, brigands!" she screamed, making terrific onslaught upon both tradesmen and their wares, seizing a floral piece bearing the words "Gone Home" in red carnations on a field of white roses, and smashing it upon

the florist's head. "'Gone Home,' is it?" she cried, "Y' mean 'Come Home,' y' pirates — yes, come home just in time to save a rag or two to me back and the price of a loaf. Out wid y', haythen, vipers, robbers! Out wid y', or I'll murder y' all in cold blood, by the saints, so I will. Och, mither, mither! Am I alive or am I dead?" And as there seemed to be no doubt about it in the minds of the vanquished, the tradesmen fled in confusion, dodging bottles of the peaty old Irish which narrowly missed them and crashed against the stair wall, leaving great stains. Then into the armchair the Amazon flopped in a state of semi-hysterics amid the wreckage, while on emerging from the lower door the tradesmen ran into the melancholy procession on the way from Bellevue and the morgue. "Go, call the police!" cried one. "There is a mad woman upstairs pounding the place to atoms."

"Better the place than me," responded the mourner chief with a sigh, proceeding still slower. It was a sorrowful band that had started out an hour before; but for blue devils of despair it was nothing compared with the return journey, which resembled a march of martyrs to the gibbet.

By the time the last landing was reached, the forty were reduced to just six, and they the heaviest weights of the crowd. Guardedly they peeped around corners and through the door-chinks, confronting at last that portraiture of wasted rage and woe pinioned down by utter collapse in the midst of her ravage. Then, with haggard eyes and hanging jaws, in fawning suppliance they advanced, pouring out their inmost souls:

"Glory be to hiven, Margaret Kelly!" cried Mike, "sure it was all a mistake. It weren't you at all, at all; but some other miserable outcast craythur wid your own name, Margaret Kelly, that were lyin' stiff in the margue, while you, the saints be praised! are home here wid us, aloive and well, and we ag'in the happiest mortals on earth — "

The swollen eyes widened, and a sinister gleam broke from their depths. "Y' look it!" shot back the shaft of irony, "y' look it — Divvil take the whole boonch!" Then, in the bitter silence, "So y' t'ought there was goin' to be a funeral and a wake did y'? Well, if you had come ten minutes sooner, there would have been — several."

One after another the mourners crept back and began restoring the lace, silk, shawls, gowns and all as to a shrine. It was a pitiful rite, performed in silence; for, as nothing could possibly be said in mitigation of their unknowing offence, they said nothing.

It was only Mike who had the courage of his vindication now: "Y' must not blame us, Margaret," he groaned. Great globules of sweat gathered in the wrinkles as he drew forth the summons from the hospital. "Look at this black-bordered liar, Margaret, look at it! Ah, Margaret, it is yourself that has a pretty case against the city for funeral expinses over a live corpse, and heavy damages for wounded affections —"

"Shut up wid your politics!" yelped the convalescent, "and give me a small dhrop of whushky, or I'll have a raylapse, and then you'll have me where you want me — tin feet under sod."

There was a skurrying to do her bidding. Margaret drank deep. Rallying, she looked abroad over the wreckage of her madness. Then a new terror came into her soul. "Moike, Moike!" she groaned, "tell me now, on your honor before God, what have y' done wid that shtockin?"

The big longshoreman staggered back. A sudden sickness took the courage out of his heart. He set his teeth and threw out his arms like a gorilla at bay. "Margaret Kelly," he moaned, "there's no use lyin' to y', an' by the saints, I won't. The shtockin' — well, here goes! The shtockin' is gone!"

The convalescent rose, but fell back again. "Gone — gone?" she cried in a voice that brought terror to every listener.

"At least, more than half of it, Margaret. There were twelve hundred dollars in the black rag —"

"Nothing more?"

"May God judge me!" was the answer, as the longshoreman thrust up his clenched hands till they almost struck the ceiling, as if his honor had been impeached. "We counted it there on the table, all of us; and then I threw the shtockin' into the coal-box."

The convalescent covered her face with her hands. "Now you have killed me," she moaned. "Merciful saints! What have I done to bring down upon me such afflictions?"

The accused took a stride forward. "Margaret, say whativer you will, I swear there was not one penny more than —"

"Divvil take the money!" screamed the convalescent, striking her forehead. "Did I say annything about money, man?"

"But, Margaret — er —"

"I didn't mean money. I meant — something else —" The swaying figure bowed in an attitude of silent grief.

The longshoreman glanced into the astonished faces, then swept his hand over his forehead with a significant sign. Had poor Margaret lost her mind? He pressed closer. "For the love of hiven, Margaret," he pursued, "what do you mane? What was in that black shtockin' —"

"Something worth more than life to me," she answered calmer now, although it was the calm of despair. "And now it's gone and me poor heart is broke, me poor heart is broke."

The clustering group stood dumb. What beside the gold did the old black stocking contain? Visions of diamonds, pearls and other precious treasures swept before them, supplementing the recollections of the bank-books and securities. Only "Longshoreman Mike" seemed to possess presence of mind now. He backed over to the coal-box and began digging with his great chimpanzee-like claws among the coals. Suddenly his square-jowled visage uplifted triumphantly. In his clutch he dragged the black length to view like a python from its lair. "Here it is, Margaret," he cried, "just as I threw it aside." He came forward and threw the rag into the convalescent's lap.

A sudden change came over the whole attitude. A new strength came into Margaret Kelly, a new illumination, a sort of spiritual revelation enveloping her. Into the dark depths she thrust her hand. Before the amazed eyes of the onlookers, who thought the receptacle empty, Margaret drew forth a faded letter and a small photograph, which was more than half obliterated with kisses. One grateful look, and the woman fell forward upon her knees, pouring out her heart in thankful prayer, burying her face in the simple tokens.

The assembled kith and kin gazed upon this drama of a solitary life as if it were quite beyond their solving. No one ventured a word, yet every one knew that for the first time in all their lives they had turned the one forbidden page in the lonely spinster's history of long watching and sustaining hope.

"Oh, Moike!" cried the woman, regaining her seat and thrusting the tender tokens into her bosom. "It's all turnin' out right, and I'm a sorry wretch not to be thankful for many blissin's, so I am. Did you say that it were a poor outcast who were mistaken for me down there in the dead house? Then go back with the hearse and shroud and all, for which, please God, I'll have no use for many a year, and bring the poor haythin craythur here, where we'll give her a dacint burial as one of our very own. Aye, don't stand starin' at me loike that, fer I'm not gone daft. I mane it all, ivery word. I don't care what may be her pasht or prisent. No one that bears the name of Margaret Kelly shall go to the Potther's Field while I live to chate the grave-digger."

The longshoreman stood aghast. "Do you really mane it, Margaret?" he queried, with surprise lighting up that look of compassion.

"From the botthom of me heart, I do," was the firm rejoinder. "Go bring the poor wretch from that accursed place; for, bad as 'Hell's Kitchen' may be, the margue, God save us from it! is worse. Bring her here in the little black house I thank hiven I have no use for, even if I do own it; and we'll give the stranger such a funeral as was niver known in the Ward, so we will —"

"An' his honor, the Mayor, shall pay the freight, eh?"

"Right and truly. Call the praist too, and do it all up in the dacentest style of the art, jus' as if it were for me. But first, jus' another wee dhrop and all join in, to swear that we're glad we're livin', nor jilious of the dead for all the good said of 'em."

The guests drew near, clapping their hands with joy — they who were but an hour gone wielding their cambrics. "Margaret, you're a trump and no mistake!" cried Mike, striking his chest.

"Long live Aunt Margaret! It's we who are proud of you, b' hivens!" chimed in the chorus. Then, amid much fluttering and sputtering, the pledge of family fealty was passed from heart to heart — such a pledge as was never known in all that humble region before. Soon after Longshoreman Mike drove away with the undertaker, while all hands fell to putting things to rights again after the ravage, pondering meanwhile not more upon the miracle of that good soul's home-coming than upon the romance about which she had so long remained silent.

Late in the evening of that eventful day the assembled forty, now generously reinforced by as many more, for the tidings of the hour had travelled fast and far, sat semicircled about the hostess, arrayed in her smartest gown. They were willing tarryers, for the bounty was of excellent variety and abundance — "the thrate of his Honor the Mayor," as Margaret grandiloquently termed it, — offering that dignitary at least one toast in four, reserving the rest for herself.

But when the undertaker's attendants entered the populous tenement, and above the measured tread of the bearers of the heavy burden could hear the longshoreman's, 'Stiddy now! Thrate her like one of us. Careful around the turn now, do y' moind!" a shudder ran through the assemblage, for every one realized the presence of the dead in truth.

With many puffings and grunts that sounded above the awful hush, the "little black house," now occupied by an unexpected tenant, was deposited in the further room from the crowded chamber where feasting and good cheer were so suddenly quelled by the tragedy of life.

"Only to think of it!" Margaret kept echoing over and over. "Here I am, aloive and well, wid all me good frinds about me, and there, alone, unknown, frindless, widout even a mourner — "

"Come, dry up, Margaret, for the love o' hiven!" put in Mike, entering the room and facing the pallid faces, "and be glad thot it ain't yourself. Ah, but she has a smile on her face, that poor sufferin' nobody, as if she knew that now, even if none cared for her livin', we all are doin' our best for her dead. Come in, folks. Come in and take a look of the poor outcast, for, damme, she has the look of havin' been onct a rale leddy. Come in —"

"Niver!" A voice broke out of the chorus of shudders.

"But *I* will!" It was Margaret who leaped up courageously, as if to challenge them all. "I'm not afraid of the woman who bears me name, dead or aloive. Lead on, Moike."

Mike led, and the company, all a-tremble, snailed a long way after them. Suddenly a strange low cry came from the far chamber. It nearly froze the hearts of the listeners, for they realized that it was Margaret's. Instantly she came plunging back, her face expressive of emotion almost tragic, and flung

herself into the chair again, seizing the glass which rattled against her teeth as she drank with a choking sound. "It is Margaret Kelly — it is, it is!" she moaned. "Ah, my God! will miracles never cease?"

The company pressed about her with eyes darting flames of terror. It was Mike who first found voice, as usual. "Margaret Kelly," he said almost sternly, "have you gone stark mad?"

The woman did not seem to hear. She drew with trembling fingers the little tokens which she had deposited in her bosom after rescuing them from the black stocking. "Poor child!" she droned. "It is the way with disappointed love: it drives some to the savings bank, some to the gutthers. It drove this Margaret to the bank, that Margaret to the margue."

No one offered any elucidation of this enigma, so the woman continued: "Sit down, me frinds, for I have a long shtory to tell ye — aye, and a true one. Oh, you will never regret. Do y' see this picture — these letthers — this lock o' hair? Listen!"

The company sank back into their seats in the tense silence. "It is the unspoken history of a good woman's first and last love affair, if I do say so mesilf, and you will belave it, ivery word." She made a gesture to close the door of the middle room, beyond which were gathered a few of the curious whom the mysterious power of death draws rather than repels.

"It is jus' tin years ago, comin' Saint Pathrick's Day, thot I first met Danny McFee, at the ball of the 'Ancient Order of Hibernians.' An' whin I say thot he was as foine a young gintleman as iver breathed the breath of hiven and made love to an honest girl, I mane it on me heart, whativer has since come bechune to part us. Nor was I the only one to fall in love wid him thot night — but no matther. Danny was the ideel of the thrue man, a soldier in form and manners, tinder with the fair, wid some money and plinty of promise as a risin' lawyer in the full of the political shwim.

"Well, I moight as well confess, unbeknownst to anny of ye, Danny and I mit of a Sunday afternoon at ould Aunt Bridget's in Harlem for a stroll in the park to make our plans and build castles on hope, for we had everything to make the heart of the lover glad. During the wake we wrote daily letthers; and for

fear some one might discover it, I took a private letther-box around the corner on the avenue where a Frinch Jew kept a cigar and news store. For many months I recaved the daily confession of the brave man's love, such as I treasure to this day. But suddenly, though I was faithful in ivery word and thought to me Danny, I got no replies to me letthers, though he swore that he had regularly done his duty. This was the cause of the first coolness. But one day I found a letther in the box — and such a letther it was! It called me ivery swate name in the catalogue, makin' appointments and endin' with untold millions of kisses. It was signed 'Tom Farrell,' but such a name I niver knew. Well, I t'rew the letther away; but the nixt day, instead of one from me Danny, there was another from 'Tom Farrell.' And on the day followin' another, so that by Sunday I had foive. With much misery then I called at Aunt Bridget's, resolved to lay the whole mysterious matther before Danny, for I was beside mesilf wid worryin'.

"But, alas, alone wid Danny I lost heart. I saw from his coolness that he thought me lyin' when I said I had not recaved his letthers; and I — well, I thought him playin' the fool wid me. I saw trouble brewin', but did not think it would come so soon. But to me shame the next mornin' I found the package of strange letthers missin' from me pocket, and then came a messenger from Danny wid a cruel note. 'It's all over, Margaret,' says he. 'That pack of letthers explains everythin'. I found thim on Aunt Bridget's flure, where you dropped thim. My God! why did you not tell me, like an honest girl,' says he, 'that you loved this man more than me? But that's the end. I am writin' this on board of the *Juliet*, bound for Austhralia,' says he, 'so good-bye! Be happy wid your "Tom Farrell," whoever he is,' says he, 'but truer to him than to me, or you will rue it. Good-bye, foriver, Margaret, though you are the only woman I iver loved or iver will love, so help me God,' says he," and the narrator bent down, her lank frame riven with sobs.

"Well, me frinds, this shock well nigh brought me to me bed, so it did, but the next day I recaved another, which did it completely. Wid all me poor soul burnt out wid rage at the injustice, ashamed and sick at heart, I wint around the corner to give

up the kay to the accursed letther-box. Opening it for the last time, there, to me horror, I found another wan of thim 'Tom Farrell' letthers, and a damon's fury came into me heart. I had torn the thing in twain whin, looking up, I saw a pale little woman enter, advance straight up to me letther-box and stand stock dumb. Thin, as she turned and saw the rent sheet in my hand, she flew at me like a tigress. 'Give me that letther!' she screamed, clawin' my face to shreds. 'Who are you? Is it you who have been sthalin' me letthers for the past week?' she yowled, her face purple wid righteous anger.

"'No,' says I, calmly, 'it's you who have been sthalin' mine.'

"''Tis a lie in your t'roat!' says she. 'An' I now d'clare to God that your thavin' of me letthers has lost me the besht mon in the worruld—'

"'Wrong again,' says I. 'You may have lost the next besht; but it's I who have lost the besht, t'rough your thavin' of me letthers.'

"'I'll have you arristed!' says she.

"'I'll have you hanged!' says I.

"'What's your name?' says she.

"'Margaret Kelly,' says I.

"'Wha-a-at!' says she.

"'Before the livin' God!' says I.

"The little woman covered her face wid her hands. 'An' so is mine,' she moaned. And we two Margaret Kellys stood starin'.

"'Thin, if this letther is yours," says I, 'others that I have are yours too.'

"'An' I can return the complimint,' says she. 'For here is a boonch of love letthers from a mon I niver heard of.' An' she passed over to me the precious boondle of poor Danny's declaration of undyin' affiction. Thin we jumped into that blundherin' sheeny, the both o' us, for he had given us both the same box, thinkin' we were one and the same, and aiche av us lost a good mon in consequince. An' whin we got t'rough wid the blundherin' postmaster, he weren't fit for a doormat to a mud cabin.

"But, proud born as I was, I took me poison like a leddy. Divvil a bit did I explain to Danny, even had I known his whereabouts. I jus' bookled down to makin' money and savin' it;

while she, poor craythur, fell away to a shadow after thot, for I met her once or twict, and losin' her hold on life, she wint to the wrong. Ye know, disappointed affliction works different ways on different peoples — the makin' of some, the breakin' of others; an' though I still love Danny McFee wid all me poor heart, divvil a step would I take to repair his injustice or — "

Margaret had risen and stood quivering, with her clenched hands thrown wide; but her mood of vindication was interrupted by the sudden presence of one of the guests from the still chamber beyond. His face wore a peculiar expression as he said, "There's a man at the other door. Has a boondle of flowers. Says he knows the poor dead woman and wants to pay his last respicts — "

"Let him in!" cried Margaret. "By hivens! it's the mysterious 'Tom Farrell,' so it is. Let him in. Ah, now that I have seen the little woman who robbed me of my happiness widout knowin', I think I'd loike to set eyes on the man who, from the same cause, robbed us both." She started to follow her leader, the company fired with a strange sense of curiosity.

By the time they reached the threshold of the darkened room, however, they all paused, for the stranger had entered, laid a mass of white roses upon the casket, and was kneeling beside it with his cheek against the lid, his face hidden in his encircling arms. This pitiful rite brought a hush like that of the sepulchre itself; and when at last the mourner lifted his bearded countenance and straightened, tall and almost spectral in the semi-darkness, he gazed upon the astonished faces that gleamed white and phantasmal against the deep shadows.

"Thank you, my good people," were his first words after recovering from his embarrassment. "I know that I have no right to be here, but I could not resist, for I once knew this good woman well — aye, loved her and love her memory now."

The plaintive quiver thickened many a throat with compassion, and more than one advanced as if to offer the stranger comfort.

"Yes, good friends, I loved her, and she was once my promised wife. But there came a misunderstanding between us, and fool that I was, instead of solving the mystery which was the cause of it, I laid all the blame on the innocent, and we parted, never to meet again till now with the Great Shadow between. You who

are young, listen and take warning. If ever you love and are bound to another with all your heart and mind, and there comes a cloud between, do not part so. Wave the cloud away, then part if you must. That is all. I thank you more than I can say, kind friends, for this precious moment, and I shall carry the memory of it to my dying hour. And now, before I go, may I have just one last look at the departed? Do I ask too much?"

It was Longshoreman Mike who came forward, his cheeks glistening with tears. "Stranger," he faltered, "it's you that can't ask anythin' here that you can't have to your heart's contint, God savin' you, sor!" Reverently he removed the lid from over the still face, motioning for the light.

The stranger bowed low and with that stony calm which is expressive of deepest emotion in a strong man. For some few tickings of the old clock he gazed upon the marble features, then leaped back with a strange exclamation. "But that — that is not Margaret Kelly," he cried. "I — I must have been misinformed." He tore at his neckband as if choking. "That is not Margaret Kelly — *my* Margaret —"

"Nor ours ayther," groaned Mike. Then, dropping the lid, he rushed upon the stranger, who recoiled from him. "F' the love o' Gawd, man, who are you?" he panted. "Are you not the mysterious 'Tom Farrell?'"

The sound of that name was like a blow that brings blood. "I — 'Tom Farrell?'" groaned the stranger. "No, no, God forbid! That's the man whose unknowing wrong it was that parted my love and me. My name is Daniel McFee!"

A wild voice pierced the gloom. Out of the shadows there came a woman's figure, swift as a whirlwind. "Danny, Danny, Danny!" she called out, in the agony and the joy of her heart, and flung herself bodily into the stranger's arms. It was the original Margaret Kelly.

A Celestial Crime.*

BY CHARLES STUART PRATT.

NOT since Professor Webster of Harvard murdered his friend, Dr. Parkman, and cremated the body in the laboratory furnace, has any crime within college bounds approached that tragedy in sensational features — with one exception.

The extraordinary events I am about to relate make that exception. At the very start, however, I would like to say that the account of this later college tragedy includes no such revolting details as make a nightmare of even the memory of the Webster-Parkman case. This later tragedy, instead, involves a beautiful element of romance, while at the same time it surpasses the earlier in strangeness, especially in the startling solution of the mystery — a denouement quite without precedent, I believe, in the annals of crime.

On the evening of the 14th of November, President Everett of Banvard College — for obvious reasons the names of persons and places are slightly veiled — gave a reception, which closely connected events rendered the most famous in the history of the old university town.

This reception was in honor of a young Norwegian explorer, who had a short time before made the pioneer crossing of Greenland on skees. With him, however, this narrative is not concerned,

* This story received the first prize of $1,000 in THE BLACK CAT prize competition, which closed March 31, 1897.

but rather with three of the college professors. These professors, in accepting the president's invitation, expressed their admiration of the lion of the evening, and their pleasure at the prospect of meeting him — yet each in his heart knew he was going, not to meet the explorer, but to meet the president's daughter.

The three professors were all comparatively young men. Prof. Henry Thurston had that fall been appointed to the chair of English Literature. In the popular mind he had won his spurs, in the pages of the *Free Lance* and the *North Continent*, in three or four headlong tilts against the new realism, and he had just published a novel which sustained his leadership of the romantic school in America — all of which would indicate the man of imagination and fervid temperament.

Prof. Gordon Browne, after sailing close to the wind of dogma through his divinity course, and then plunging into the Toynbee Hall work in London, and later into the college settlement beginnings at home, was now occupying the newly established chair of Applied Christianity. Professor Browne and Professor Thurston were cousins, and the two had been given their education and start in life by a wealthy uncle, a man of rigid views and notable piety. It is perhaps needless to name in this connection the nephew that stood nearest the old man's heart.

The third of the three professors, Spencer Whitney, was the son of the now aged theological war-horse of the university, from whom he had inherited an introspective mind and a New England conscience. He was the assistant astronomer, and had attracted some attention in scientific circles by certain discoveries in what might be called microscopic astronomy, and by two monographs on meteoric dust and the cosmic origin of aerolites.

Neither of the three professors had married; but, having successfully passed the preparatory stage of life, and reached assured positions, it is not surprising that they had come to the conclusion of the male sex in general, that it is not good for man to be alone; still less is it surprising that on the night of the 14th of November, the daughter of their college president should have been a greater attraction than an Arctic adventurer. Miss Everett most certainly merited their admiration.

The president's reception was a distinct success. The climax of interest for those present (and for two in particular) was

reached when the handsome blond Norwegian, clad in furs, skated into the great parlors on the identical pair of skees which had borne him across the snowfields and glaciers of Greenland. The sudden focusing of attention on this picturesque figure made the opportunity for one of the three professors to ask, and for Miss Everett to answer, a somewhat momentous question. Save for this *sub-rosa* incident, to which we shall refer later, the details of the evening are of no more concern to us than the lion of the evening himself. The real drama begins at the reception's end.

It was nearing midnight, and most of the guests had departed, when Professor Thurston and his cousin stepped out into the sharp November night. They at once entered into talk so earnest, so excited, that, as they passed out of the old colonial gate, and started down South Avenue toward Banvard Square, a policeman standing in the shadow of an elm pricked up his ears.

"But, cousin," one of them was saying, "listen to me, for heaven's sake, listen to me — you must do it!"

"Never," said the other, with suppressed vehemence, "never! And if ever you —"

A sudden gust of wind whirled away the rest of the sentence, and before the next lull the two had passed beyond the policeman's hearing. "Look out," he muttered, "breakers ahead!"

Barely had he settled back once more, when a third person came out of the gate, glanced down the avenue toward the other two, then strode off in the same direction. At the instant of turning, the street light fell on his face, and the policeman noted its pallor and strained expression, then idly wondered if, after all, it was not the ghastly effect of the electric glare — yet he was sure he heard the man cry out, half under breath, "Too late — lost!"

The grounds of Banvard College, a long triangle of grassy lawns, shrubbery, and great elms that have been generations in growing their spreading pendulous branches, lie between South and North Avenues. These avenues converge to the west, and finally meet in the paved space of Banvard Square. Numerous paths wind across from avenue to avenue, one or another touching in its course all the older college buildings. Some of the more recent, such as the gymnasium and the observatory, have straggled off into the region on the other side of North Avenue. A little way out from the southwest corner of Banvard Square stand the

great buildings of the college press, and beyond lie the marshy meadows through which flow the tidal waters of the James.

Not far from the end of the college grounds, where the last of the winding walks widens midway into a circle bordered by rhododendrons, stands the statue of Banvard, the college founder. As the cousins reached the entrance to this last path they halted for a minute or two, still talking in the same vehement manner; then, with an impatient gesture, Professor Thurston whirled on his heel, and Professor Browne turned into the gravel walk, and quickly disappeared among the shrubbery.

At this moment Professor Whitney, a few rods in the rear, his quick eye noting the actions of his fellow-professors, also turned off the avenue, and struck into a path which, running at a diverging angle from the other, led in the direction of the observatory.

Professor Thurston, after a dozen steps on toward the Square, stopped abruptly, whirled about, quickly retraced his steps, hesitated, and then started swiftly along the path his cousin had taken.

Almost immediately he reappeared, stepped hesitatingly out upon the sidewalk, dashed off, stopped, then wheeled back again to the entrance. With slight variations these movements were thrice repeated, in a manner indicating great excitement and still greater indecision. Finally, with a nervous toss of the head, and the firm step of resolve, he walked swiftly to the Square, and along the diagonal flagging to the southwest exit.

Professor Thurston had not observed, at the moment of leaving the college grounds, a police officer who, coming almost simultaneously around the corner from the side street opposite, had stood and watched his zigzag movements, and then taken the same direction along the opposite sidewalk.

Presently the professor came to the little square in front of the college press. Off to the right ran the old residential street where he boarded. He had set one foot on the flagged walk to cross over to this street, when he stopped rigid in his tracks, clapped his right hand to his hip pocket, and exclaimed, "My God!" in a tone low but distinctly audible in the midnight stillness.

Professor Thurston did not cross the street, just then. For a full minute he stood, one foot on the flagging, one on the sidewalk, his right hand at his hip pocket, his left pushing his hat back from his forehead, as if in perplexity or profound thought.

He then walked rapidly along the side of the little square, and at the corner of the block turned and quickened his pace along a deserted cross street.

Once he half halted and glanced back over his shoulder, as one does on hearing stealthy steps following in the night, but no human being was in sight on the street behind him.

Turning upon a wider thoroughfare, he soon passed the ragged edge of the town, and felt in his nostrils the pungent scent of the marshes, and in his eye the gleam of moonlight upon flowing water. The road was walled up five or six feet above the meadows, and ran straight across them, and on a dead level, save where it rose and bridged the river, a quarter mile out from the town.

Once a dull thud, as of one jumping from a height, caused the professor to glance back a second time. Had he been more disturbed, or even curious enough to cross the street and look down over the railing, he might have caught a glimpse of a vague form, which presently followed in the shadow of the wall, and momently peered over the top toward the object of its pursuit.

But Professor Thurston did not cross the street, nor did he again look back over his shoulder. On the bridge he stopped, thrust his right hand into his hip pocket, drew forth a small object, and tossed it over the railing. There was a falling gleam as of polished metal, a splash, and silence.

And in the silence there rolled out over the meadows the mellow boom of the midnight bells. The sound and the scene called up the famous bridge-song of another college professor, who was a poet, and who also once "stood on the bridge at midnight, as the clocks were striking the hour." In a rich vibrant voice the professor chanted:

"How often, O how often,
I had wished that the ebbing tide
Would bear me away on its bosom
O'er the ocean wild and wide!

"For my heart was hot and restless,
And my life was full of care,
And the burden laid upon me
Seemed greater than I could bear.

"But now it has fallen from me,
It is buried in the sea;
And only the sorrow of others
Throws its shadow over me."

Professor Thurston walked back into town with a swift unhesitating step. At his own door he slipped the latch-key into the narrow slot with a hand nervous, perhaps, but unfumbling. As he turned up the light and drew the shades, and then for a

long time paced the room in a state of high excitement, he little thought that, every time his shadow crossed the plain area of the curtain, two keen eyes over the way noted the pose of that phantom professor, the character of its movement, and drew conclusions therefrom. Such was the fact. When, at last, the light went out, Sergeant Pike, the police officer who had at first followed Professor Thurston from curiosity, and later with his detective instinct roused, walked to the nearest street-lamp and looked at his watch. It was twenty-three minutes of four.

The next morning Professor Thurston was late at breakfast. Mrs. Dorothy Richards, the elderly lady who made a home for the young man, was the widow of a college official. For many years she had lightened her loneliness and buttressed her toppling fortunes by boarding a succession of widower and bachelor professors. She was a motherly soul, and had shared the depressions of the older and the elations of the younger. To Henry Thurston she was like some kind old aunt, humoring his whims, and with assumed authority demanding his secrets.

On this particular morning, as she took up the silver tongs and selected the exact measure of sugar which suited the professor's taste in coffee, and poured the yellow cream over the sparkling cubes, she gave a dubious little nod that set a-quiver the violet ribbons of her morning-cap. Then through her gold-bowed glasses she sent a teasing glance across the table, and remarked:

"You came in late, last night, Professor — I was awake myself, at the time, and afterwards — and I hoped the excitement that kept you walking your room for hours was of a happy nature!"

"Quite so, my dear Mrs. Richards — indeed, it was an absolutely blissful excitement. I'd like to tell you the secret, but, really, I don't dare speak it aloud as yet — I might whisper it, though," he added, and stepped around the table and whispered in her ear. "Do you wonder now that I walked the floor?" he asked, as he resumed his seat and faced her across the table, a dancing light in his eyes and a manly red in his cheeks.

"Not a whit," replied Mrs. Richards, lifting the coffee-pot and pouring the rich brown liquid over the cream and sugar, while a heightened color followed the smile over her delicate old face. "I was sure I detected the buoyancy of good fortune in your step, and could hardly wait till morning to congratulate you."

"I thank you," said the professor, taking his cup of coffee.

"And what is more," went on Mrs. Richards, shaking her plump forefinger at the professor, "I believe I can guess — "

Just what Mrs. Richards guessed will never be known — she did not finish the sentence. At that instant the shrill cry of a newsboy penetrated the windows like the screech of a steam whistle.

"*Globe* extra! Terrible crime! Professor Browne murdered by the Banvard statue on the college green! Full — account —"

Professor Thurston's coffee-cup fell with a crash, and the red receded from his face.

"Your cousin!" cried Mrs. Richards, horror in her voice.

She had started up to call the newsboy, when the bell rang sharply. As she hurried into the hall and opened the door, an officer pushed by and into the room.

"Professor Thurston, I believe?" inquired the man.

The professor was apparently too overcome to speak. He bowed his head in answer.

"It is then my unhappy duty," said the officer, with a triumphant air that rather belied his words, "to arrest you for the murder of Professor Browne."

"Stop!" cried Mrs. Richards, facing the officer, a flame of indignation in her face. "Why, the two men are cousins, and have lived like brothers!"

"Precisely. Cain and Abel were brothers," remarked the officer drily.

"You brute!" was all Mrs. Richards could find voice to say — and so saying she sank into a chair, and burst into helpless tears.

Professor Thurston stood like one dazed. "Poor Gordon, poor Gordon!" he repeated over and over. "Only last night I left him at the college grounds."

"Yes," interjected the officer, "and he was found just where you left him, on the college grounds, by the Banvard statue."

The professor took no notice. "Poor Gordon!" he repeated — "and to think I had hot words with him, the very last night!"

"Look here!" exclaimed the officer, laying his hand roughly on the professor's arm, "you're not obliged to incriminate yourself further — and there is no time — you must come with me."

At this Professor Thurston roused himself. "I am ready to go," he said simply. And then, stepping to Mrs. Richards, he

took her hand. "Good friend," he said, "cheer up! It's but a dreadful blunder — all will come out right. Good-by."

She could not reply, and the sound of sobbing followed the two men out of the door.

The lip-to-lip telegraphy which carries the news of disaster or crime through a crowded town is well-nigh miraculous. At 6.45 A. M. a janitor crossing the college grounds had discovered, by the Banvard statue, the body of the murdered professor. By 7.30 the news had reached the outskirts in every direction. Careful statistics gathered by the *Globe* reporters, and tabulated by the Banvard professor of mathematics, demonstrated that the average speed of the news was one mile in eleven minutes.

Close on the heels of this first sensation sped the no less startling news of the arrest of the murderer, and the murderer's surprising identity — then both burst the town barriers and flashed with electric swiftness over the country, and under the sea to London and the university centers of the continent.

Before the first shock had subsided, the press set its reporters at work, and kept the public at the fever point by its discoveries and theories. One enterprising reporter ingeniously disguised himself as the college chaplain, and gained entrance to the prisoner's cell. Professor Thurston instantly penetrated the deception, but before the man was ejected he made certain observations of such vital moment that they were published under scareheads, and specially despatched by the Amalgamated Press — to wit, the disconcerting color of the murderer's hair and eyes, a peculiar and sinister twist of his moustache, and the precise number of gold fillings in his incisor teeth.

A week later, a great morning journal, whose chief purpose in existing was to anti-climax its evening contemporaries, published full details of a daring burglary at the home of Mrs. Dorothy Richards, of the capture of the burglar in Professor Thurston's writing room, and the finding in his possession of an important piece of evidence which had escaped the search of the detectives. This was a paper in Professor Thurston's handwriting, apparently the plot of a romantic novel, in which the hero acquired fortune by murdering the man who stood in the way of his heirship. The connection between this plot on paper and the murder of Prof. Gordon Browne was obvious, as will presently appear.

The notes for the novel undoubtedly led to the rumor, published with full details, that Professor Thurston in his solitary cell was writing an autobiographic romance, embodying the secretest secrets of his recent crime; and that this book was being set up on three new linotype machines, and would be published simultaneously in English, French and German on the day of his execution.

The achievements of the press reached a climax, shortly before the trial, in the astounding discovery, announced with profoundest regrets and with profoundest sympathy for the distinguished family, that Miss Everett, the beautiful daughter of the president of Banvard College, was in some as yet unrevealed way implicated in the murder of Gordon Browne. The very vagueness of this report opened the way to the wildest conjectures.

On the opening day of the trial, the extraordinary circumstances of the case, and the character and position of those concerned, crowded the court-room. College dignitaries, ladies of social rank, eminent lawyers, packed every available space. Hundreds fairly fought for entrance. Could seats have been had for money, they would have gone at a higher premium than the favorite chairs at the Symphony concerts.

The counsel for the prosecution, after alluding to the peculiar wickedness of what might very properly be called a fratricidal crime, said, with an air of deep conviction, that while no eye had witnessed the murder of Prof. Gordon Browne, the motives for that murder were so evident, and the chain of circumstantial evidence so clear, and unbroken, and convincing, that the calling of witnesses became little more than a legal formality preceding the verdict of guilty. He would therefore briefly demonstrate, with the exactness of a problem in Euclid, that Prof. Henry Thurston, moved by the two chief motives to murder, cupidity and jealousy, had, on the night of the 14th of November, at twenty-five minutes to twelve, by the Banvard statue on the college grounds, murdered his fellow-professor, his cousin, his almost brother, by one terrible blow from the butt of a pocket revolver — a cowardly blow, struck from behind.

The prosecution first proceeded to prove its theory of the avarice motive to the murder, touching lightly Professor Thurston's personal finances, and depending principally on the will of the prisoner's uncle, lately deceased, by which, without so much

as a dollar's allowance to the prisoner, his vast fortune was conveyed entire to the prisoner's cousin, Professor Browne. The prisoner was shown to be the next heir-at-law.

Following this, with much expressed regret at the necessity of dragging the name of so honored a lady into the case, evidence was submitted to show the intense rivalry of the two cousins for the hand of Miss Everett.

Then, starting with President Everett's reception, the events of that night were passed before the lime-light of legal scrutiny. The policeman stationed that night before the president's home related how the two professors left the gate in hot dispute, and testified to the threat he had half overheard.

The murdered professor's watch had been crushed in his fall. It had stopped at twenty-five minutes to twelve.

The chief witness for the prosecution, Sergeant Pike, came on the stand with the same air of being master of the situation which he had worn on the morning of the arrest. He had turned on to South Avenue, opposite the path leading by the Banvard statue, at twenty-three or four minutes to twelve — one or two minutes after the murdered man's watch had stopped — and at that instant had observed the prisoner emerge from the aforementioned path under most violent excitement.

Sergeant Pike described in detail the rousing of his curiosity, which gradually changed to suspicion, and then to conviction, as he had followed the professor in his night walks. He made much of the incoherent raving of the prisoner while on the bridge, after he had thrown some glittering object over the rail — his ear had caught some of the crazy sentences, about being carried off by the ebb tide, and something he couldn't bear, and a rigmarole about burying something in the sea. His description of the shadow pantomime on the curtain was damaging evidence.

Mrs. Richards was obliged to corroborate the floor walking, as well as the admission of "hot words" at the time of the arrest, though she endeavored to give both a favorable interpretation.

Sergeant Pike then related how at daybreak he had again visited the bridge, and, the tide being down, had discovered what he believed to be the glittering object the prisoner had thrown over the rail — a nickel-mounted pocket revolver. Although tossed well out from the upper side of the bridge, the combined current

of the river and the ebbing tide had borne it back again as it sank, until it had lodged among the rocks at the base of the pier.

A hardware clerk identified this revolver as one he had sold to Professor Thurston somewhere between the tenth and fourteenth of November, about the twelfth, he should say.

Medical experts testified that death had followed almost instantaneously on the crashing in of the victim's skull. With a plaster cast they made clear, by the position and direction of the depression, that the blow must have fallen from above and behind.

The butt of the pistol fitted this depression.

Closing this final evidence, the famous expert, holding out the death-mask in his left hand, raised the revolver by the barrel in his right, and said solemnly:

"For one instant, on that fatal night of the 14th of November, this revolver was raised above the innocent head from which was made this mask — for one instant — then descended the terrific blow which crushed the skull, and crushed out the life, of Gordon Browne."

As he spoke these words, he brought the revolver down on the fragile death-mask with a crash that sent its fragments flying over the court-room and into the faces of judge and jury.

This dramatic demonstration of the murder was pictured in all the evening papers, and carried conviction to their readers. Had the public been the jury that night, they would have given the verdict of guilty without leaving their seats.

The following day — it was now the second week of the trial — Professor Thurston went on the stand. He appeared serious, but neither agitated nor depressed. Indeed, this had been the manner of the man through the trial, and it had called out much comment, a few holding it to be the air of innocence, most, however, regarding it as brazen audacity. The reporters had dilated on the man's colossal coolness and iron nerve. One keen-eyed reporter had gone so far as to assert that at the awful moment when the revolver had shattered the death-mask, and men turned pale and women screamed, he had seen a smile on the face of the prisoner.

Professor Thurston's defense consisted chiefly in a new interpretation of the events of the fatal night, rather than a denial of the events themselves. He admitted the dispute with Professor Browne. His cousin had come to him previous to the reception,

and proposed to divide equally with him the fortune left by their uncle. He had refused to accept the gift — money which his uncle had deliberately decided to withhold from him. On leaving the president's house at the close of the reception, Professor Browne had again pressed the matter, and he had impatiently threatened that if ever his cousin mentioned it again he would cut his acquaintance. Nevertheless, his cousin had continued his arguments and persuasions as they walked down South Avenue.

At the entrance to the path leading past the Banvard statue, Professor Browne had struck across the grounds toward his home. They had parted with some hot words on his part, words which a moment later he had regretted, and with the purpose of recalling them he had turned back and started to overtake his cousin. After a minute, not coming in sight of Professor Browne, he had returned to the avenue, and had then very likely acted with the indecision noted by Sergeant Pike.

Reaching the neighborhood of the college press, he had suddenly thought of the revolver in his pocket, and moved by a sudden impulse he had walked out to the bridge and thrown it into the river. The crazy rigmarole he was credited with was simply a few verses of a poem by one Longfellow, a college professor.

On request, Professor Thurston recited these verses, with such effect that the manager of a leading lecture bureau, who chanced to be present, made this memorandum:

"If he escapes hanging, offer him $500 a night for fifty public readings."

Professor Thurston stated that he had walked his room till the hour reported, under the excitement of a great happiness which had lately befallen him. He declined to define that happiness. He also declined to account for buying and then throwing away the revolver. He did not refer to the motive of jealousy.

The first witness on the following morning was Miss Everett. Her appearance created a sensation. Ladies lifted their lorgnettes, and leveled their opera glasses, and stared. Men whistled under breath. Miss Everett wore no symbol of solemnity. She stood in the murky court-room like an Aurora — attired in a marvelous arrangement of brownish moss-green, slashed and enlivened by coppery pink, and heightened to æsthetic splendor by a corsage decoration of Mermet roses.

"I have insisted," she said, with clear directness, "on making a statement in behalf of the prisoner which his sense of honor has prevented his making for himself. On the evening of the 14th of November, at my father's reception, I promised to become the wife of Prof. Henry Thurston. I believe this disposes of the motive of jealousy." In a flash she added, "Would I had the power to disprove all other charges, which are equally false."

Then she turned toward the prisoner with a radiant smile — and the look that flashed between them quickened the heartbeats of the women, and made every man present wish himself for the instant in the place of the prisoner. One man, whose eyes never left the face of the witness, would gladly have taken that place had he known the next step would have been to the gallows.

Later on in the trial, Professor Thurston, being again on the witness stand, said that he felt in duty bound, now that Miss Everett's statement had loosed the seal of silence, to make an explanation in regard to the unaccounted-for revolver. He had, he said, previous to the reception, been intensely jealous of his now dead cousin, and of one other among Miss Everett's admirers. Hope had alternated with wild despair; and during a period of depression he had bought the revolver, determined to end his life should he be rejected. He could not now say, he added, whether he should have carried out that purpose, but it was his deliberate intention at the time. Along by the college press he had suddenly thought of the revolver, then useless, and on the impulse of the moment had hurried out to the bridge over the James and thrown it into the river. It was under the elation of his happiness that afterward he had walked his room till twenty-three minutes of four.

The trial neared its end. The chief evidence for the defense, touching the events of the night of the murder, on which the verdict really hung, lay in the unsupported statements of the prisoner. Over against this stood the more tangible evidence for the prosecution, the whole array of compromising circumstances, with the crushed skull, the revolver fitting the depression, and the prisoner, the acknowledged owner of that revolver, emerging from the path one minute after the stopping of the dead man's watch.

Miss Everett's words and presence had, indeed, made a favora-

ble impression. The attorney for the prosecution, however, tarnished the brightness of this impression by dragging it through the dust as a cunning trick to win the sympathy of the jury and dazzle them with her beauty. In his summing up he ignored the jealousy motive, but added the engagement to his argument on the avarice side. He ridiculed the suicide afterthought. He made the most of the evidence of the medical experts.

He would credit the prisoner, he said, with inventing a most ingenious story, which dovetailed into the actual facts, established by his witnesses, in a way quite worthy of a romantic novelist — but what was such a story worth? — was not the prisoner a man trained to the business of devising plots? — was not the romantic novelist, in short, a professional literary liar?

This closing sentence formed the topic of editorials in the next issue of all the literary journals in the country. In the pages of the *Free Lance* and the *North Continent* there were mighty tournaments, between the adherents of the romantic and realistic schools, over the problem of a novelist's veracity.

The judge had delivered his charge. The jury had been out some hours, and still had not reached an agreement. The foreman had asked once and again for instructions, which the judge had given, adding to the last the injunction that the minority must give due weight not only to the evidence but to the opinion of the majority — a point which, as I remember, called out much adverse comment in the legal reviews of the trial.

Slowly the clock ticked away the minutes of the silent waiting. The late afternoon light was waning — yet no one left the crowded court-room. The suspense was becoming unbearable, when, at last, the jury filed back, and the foreman announced the verdict:

"Guilty!"

Miss Everett was evidently unprepared for this. She turned to her father's face with a look of inquiry and amazed unbelief, but reading there the whole horrible truth, she turned toward the prisoner, and her very soul went out in the cry, "Henry!"

And back through the shuddering hush of the crowded court-room came the firm answer, "My love!"

For sixty awful seconds the court and the people sat dumb before this sacred expression and interchange of love. An agony of sympathy clutched at every throbbing heart.

A sudden movement, a low inarticulate cry, caused every one to bend toward the back of the room. A tall figure had risen in the gathering gloom. The man's dark not-old face seemed suddenly to have turned aged and ashen.

"Stop!" he commanded, in a voice that sounded far and sepulchral. "Stop! The verdict must be reversed! Henry Thurston is not guilty!" Those near saw the man stagger against the back of the chair in front of him. "I must speak," he added.

The judge broke the silence of astonishment that followed. "Professor Whitney," he said, "this is unprecedented procedure, but your father's name, and your own, entitle you to attention. Speak on."

"First, let me say that Professor Thurston has stated the exact truth as to his parting with his cousin. I was behind them as they walked down the avenue. I saw the parting, as I turned into another path to cross over to the observatory. I saw Professor Thurston start after his cousin, and almost immediately turn back to the avenue, hesitate, and then walk on toward the Square."

"But why in God's name, knowing this, have you been silent?" broke in the judge.

"Because I am a guilty man," came the answer in a voice shaken with emotion — "because, before the bar of my own conscience I stand condemned of intended murder, not of Gordon Browne, but of the man before me, of Henry Thurston. Confession must be part of my punishment. I loved the woman who is so be Henry Thurston's wife. When Gordon Browne was found dead, my heart leaped because one rival was removed; when Henry Thurston was arrested for his murder, my heart exulted that he, too, was to be taken from my path. Knowing his innocence, knowing shortly, too, the instrument of his cousin's death, I buried his deliverance in my heart, and waited for my time to come. Miss Everett's heroic avowal let loose within me a hideous doubt; it unleashed the scorpions of conscience—from that hour I have been in hell! The two cries that followed the verdict broke the last fetter of my damnable delusion, and I could speak."

In the ghastly half-light the man's face was terrible to look upon. Moved by a pitying purpose of turning the current of self-accusation, the judge asked, "But if Henry Thurston did not murder his cousin, who did?"

"No man — no man murdered Gordon Browne. It was a celestial crime — if crime there be."

A vague suspicion that they were listening to a man crazed by the tension of excitement and mental torture began to show itself in faces here and there. But, led outside of himself, the man now spoke with comparative calmness.

"I am, as you know, the assistant professor of astronomy. It was my purpose to spend the night after the reception at the observatory. The night of the 14th of November is of special interest to astronomers who are making meteoric studies, for on that night the earth, still passing through the great November swarm of meteors from the radiant of Taurus, also intersects in its orbit the distinct swarm from the radiant of Leo, known as Leonids.

"As I crossed the college grounds, with eyes half lifted, noting the direction of the faint lines of light now and then momentarily traced on the dark azure, I was conscious of a dazzling meteoric light half behind, to the left, and in turning had a glimpse of trailing fire which seemed to descend into the tree-tops. But such glimpses are so deceptive that I gave it no special thought, and went on to the observatory, where I spent the night.

"In the morning, when I heard of the murder and the crushed temple, in a flash I saw again the meteoric trail descending — it was, I now recalled, in the very direction of the Banvard statue — and I seemed to recall also a sound of impact, as if recorded by the sub-conscious act of memory. Could it be? — had that fiery meteoric stone struck down Professor Browne?

"When the crowds had dispersed, I went to the scene of the murder. As I was searching the ground near about, poking in under the rhododendrons, the old gardener, who was setting up among them a winter protection of evergreens, spoke to me. 'Be you the stone professor? — now, there's a queer one,' said he, pointing with his toe.

"I had no need to look further, and wrapping the rounded stone in my handkerchief I hurried home. When in my study I unfolded the aerolite, I started — not at the mass of blended stone and iron with its fused surface, but at something attached to it — a charred fragment of skin-like substance, with a few scorched hairs — in color the same as the hair of the dead professor.

"I knew I held in my hand the secret of the murder. That

tangible evidence of the truth of my words is now at the service of the defense. I predict that the meteoric stone will fit the crushed temple more exactly than the butt of the revolver. I predict that microscopic examination of the attached hairs will establish their identity with the hair on the head of the dead man. I believe it will show singed hair above the crushed temple."

With these words Prof. Spencer Whitney sank back into his seat. The death-like silence that ensued was broken by a woman's sob — and then a cheer went up that shook the walls with a great rejoicing.

The verdict was already reversed in the hearts and minds of court and people. I need hardly add that expert testimony established all Professor Whitney had said and predicted, and that the legal reversal of the verdict shortly followed.

Some time after Henry Thurston's marriage, the professor of English literature, and the assistant professor of astronomy, in the course of a long walk and a long talk which went to the healing of a lacerated soul, had come to the bridge over the James. The air was vibrant with the soft melodies of the night wind through the marsh grass, and fragrant with the aroma of the sea, and the light of the mellow moon lay over the tidal river. As on one night memorable to both men, the famous bridge-poem came to mind, and Professor Thurston chanted low these words:

"And forever and forever,
As long as the river flows,
As long as the heart has passions,
As long as life has woes;

"The moon and its broken reflection,
And its shadows, shall appear
As the symbol of love in heaven,
And its wavering image here."

For the Sake of Lize.*

BY C. B. LEWIS.

HE fire roared, the corn-mash steamed and a trickle of moonshine whiskey came from the still. A tin cup was placed under the spout, and six men craned their necks and watched the flow until the quantity had become a "three-peg" drink. Then it was silently and solemnly handed to Uncle Ben, the oldest man and the leader, and he raised it to his lips and slowly and solemnly drank the fiery liquid without a choke. When it was down he smacked his lips, wiped his mouth on the back of his hand and said:

"Boys, it's the real stuff, and we may reckon to consider that we've got to work at last."

It had been three years since the buying of that still was first mooted among the mountaineers. The men had trapped for furs, cut wood, got out railroad ties and earned a dollar any other way they could, and the women had dug roots and gathered barks and "toted" the loads to town on their own shoulders. It takes cash to buy a still and pay freight — a tidy little sum — and those six

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $500 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

mountaineers had worked and saved and denied themselves for years. The feat had been accomplished at last. The still was at work in the bottom of Big Ravine, and the copartners swung their caps and cheered. It was an illicit still; it would be hunted for; if discovered it would be doomed and its owners sent to prison. Those things didn't worry the mountaineers, however. They would turn their corn into whiskey, their whiskey into cash, and for the next ten years they would live easy lives. There were seven owners of the still, but only six families at Beaver Cove. The seventh owner was a young man from North Carolina, named Tom Meacham. He had been admitted because he had run a still in his own State and knew all about it, and because he had a hundred dollars in cash to invest. He came on the recommendation of Uncle Ben Tillman, who had known him long and could vouch for his squareness, and he was received without question and made his home at Uncle Ben's.

The only child of the Tillmans was Lize, a girl of nineteen on the day the still came. She was a child of the hills, born and bred, but nature had been kind to her in face and figure, and ambition had aided nature. For a distance of twenty miles around she was spoken of as a "right smart gal." Among the half-dozen young mountaineers who paid her court with a view of jumping the broomstick in her company was Lije Taylor. Lije was shackelty; he was ornary; he was awkward and uncouth. He realized his failings to the fullest extent, but if Lize Tillman would consent to "jine up" with him and live in a pole-cabin without a floor and cook his bacon over a fire outside, that would be his good luck. It didn't take him long to discover that Lize wouldn't do anything of the kind. She felt herself so far above Lije Taylor that she wouldn't sit on the same log with him at the door of the cabin of a summer evening. By all the laws of human nature he ought to have sulked and moped, but he was an exception. When Tom Meacham came along and was called "a heap of a feller" and at once made an impression on the girl, Lije proved himself another exception. Instead of going into ambush and shooting his rival in the back and thus clearing the field, he bore him no grudge. In his way he had a great reverence for Lize. He looked upon her as the only woman on earth. Had she asked him

to get down on hands and knees and follow her like a dog he would have gladly obeyed. He had been refused himself, but he felt that it would be a good thing for her to marry Tom. Tom had some pretense to looks and figure, and was ambitious and would be worth a mule and a regular cabin some day. Thus it will be seen that though Lije was ornery in a general way, he had offsets for which he ought to receive due credit.

There was no secret of the still at Beaver Cove. Even the six-year-old children knew about it. The mountaineers trust each other as no other people do. The revenue agents might have come and talked for a week and they would have received no hint, and they might have searched for a month and not found the still in the Big Ravine. Moonshine whiskey was produced by the barrel and found a ready sale. For three months the still was worked night and day, and nothing happened to make the law-breakers afraid, and during this time Tom Meacham and Lize Tillman became engaged. In the case of most any other couple on the mountain an engagement would not have lasted over a week. Then the happy individuals would have joined hands, jumped over a broomstick held by the father and mother clear of the floor, and would have looked upon themselves as settled for life. With this couple it was different. They belonged to the aristocracy. They wanted to spin out the engagement and have it talked about. When the marriage day arrived they wanted to have a large gathering and be married by a "regular preacher." Uncle Ben and Aunt Nancy thought it was going to a good deal of useless bother and expense, and yet at the same time they were secretly pleased at the idea of a "blow out." It would beat a log-rolling or husking-bee, and secure the social standing of the young folks for half a century to come. While the still worked the engagement waited. While the engagement waited Lije Taylor communed with himself:

"Dod rot my hide, but why wasn't I fitten like Tom Meacham? I'm a-luvin' Lize Tillman as a mewl luves thistles, but she ain't fur me. She wouldn't look at my old butes if they wuz full o' greenbacks. Howsumever, it ain't no use to cry. If I ain't fitten, then I ain't. If I ain't fitten and never kin be fitten, then it won't do no good to worry."

He got a day off and walked down to Bristol. He had a quarter

in his pocket, and though his heart was a bit sore he had about made up his mind to buy a yard of pink or blue ribbon to add to the bridal trousseau. He would give it to show that he could rise to the occasion. When he reached town he decided on pink. He found a yard at fifteen cents, and the remaining dime was invested in tobacco. Lije was enjoying himself by wandering up and down the streets when a revenue officer invited him into a saloon and bought him beer and cigars. Suspicion had been aroused over the product of the new still, but the officers did not know which way to turn. This man set out to pump Lije, but he might as well have tried to extract honey from a rock. The moonshiner "reckoned" and "considered" and "dod rotted," but he gave up nothing. After an hour's hard work the attempt was abandoned. Left to himself, he tilted his chair back to loaf for awhile longer, and of a sudden the door of a back room opened and Tom Meacham and a revenue officer appeared. Tom had also been put through the pumping process, and as he was half drunk and the officer's face wore a bland smile Lije jumped to the conclusion that something had happened. He believed Tom to be loyal, but under pressure he might have given away something. Meacham passed out without seeing the other, and it was next morning before they met at the still. Three nights later a force of revenue officers raided out of Bristol and captured the plant. As luck would have it, all the moonshiners escaped. The still was destroyed out of hand, and though no arrests were made every man in Beaver Cove realized that he was suspected. It was a hard blow to them. They were dumb for a day or two, and then Uncle Ben called them together and said:

"See yere, boys, this was a give-away. Them critters made a straight path to the still. Thar's seven men of us, and one of the seven has got to die! Yo' hear me when I say he has only a week to live!"

"That's right — death to the informer!" all replied in chorus.

The informer against a moonshine still takes his life in his hand. If he dallies by the wayside he is a doomed man. He must leave his home and his State if he would live to make use of the blood-money, and he cannot go too far away. The puzzle in this case was that no one was missing. This seemed to prove that

no one had been bribed, but who of the seven had chattered? When a man with a secret chatters, the secret is no longer his alone. Who had been down to Bristol within a week? Tom Meacham and Lije Taylor. Had they chattered? Had they "met up" with the revenuers? Lije told the truth. He had been approached, but he had not betrayed them by word or look. Meacham made no admissions. It was Lije who was put on the defensive, and in half an hour he knew his fate. He hadn't taken blood-money, but he had chattered. As the still had been raided it was a distinction without a difference. He was marked for death. They went away and left him sitting on a log in the woods. He would not try to escape; he would be on hand when wanted. When the men had departed he let his face fall into his hands and mused:

"Tom did it — did it as suah's I'm bo'n! Got boozy and bragged, or mebbe one of 'em followed him home. It's laid to me, and they'll kill me. I could hev told on him, and proved it, too, but what would hev happened to Lize? They ar' to be married, and it would hev dun broke her heart. I'm shacklety. I'm ornary. I ain't fitten. I ain't goin' to bust up no marriage and break hearts and scandalize folks jest fur the sake of livin' on and bein' Lije Taylor. Let 'em kill."

A traitor had been doomed to death. There was no hurry about disposing of his case. Once his fate was settled he was treated like a guest. He had a cabin with an aged mother, and was her sole support. She knew of his doom before he reached home. When he arrived she hastened to set the best before him. She filled his pipe and brought him a coal to light it, and she drew her own rocking-chair to the fire and gave up her place. She looked at him in mingled love and pity, and he looked her full in the face for the first time in a year. She asked no questions and he volunteered no information. It hurt her to think that a child of hers should have turned informer, but he was preparing himself to pay the penalty like a man. They sat for an hour without speech, and then he rose up and passed out and took his way to Uncle Ben's. He pulled the latch-string and entered the cabin to find the people sitting before the fire. They greeted him one after another and then fell into conversation. They talked of

everything but the raid on the still. They laughed and joked and ate apples and pop-corn, and when Lije got up to leave he felt that he had thoroughly enjoyed his visit. Next day he put on his best clothes. Some of the men went away with their axes or rifles, but he went visiting. He was welcomed at each cabin. He was given more attention than for years before. When he finally brought up at Uncle Ben's, Lize brought him a mug of cider and a doughnut and smiled sweetly on him and asked after his mother. When he went away he sat down on a stone by the roadside and said to himself:

"Shuck my hide, but I orter be willin' to be shot fur all this! They're pilin' it on bekase they know I've got to go, but it's powerful pleasant jist the same to a man who ain't fitten. I'm going right to the end without a whimper, but I kinder wish Lize knowed about it — jist a leetle mite. I wish she kinder suspected that it wuz all fur her sake. Then she'd sort o' think I wasn't so ornary arter all."

The days passed and Lije sat on his doorstep and smoked or went visiting among the neighbors. Six days had gone by when he went down to Uncle Ben's at about four o'clock in the afternoon. The old man sat in his door with the Bible on his lap. He knew that Lije stood before him, but it was a long time before he looked up and removed his glasses from his eyes. Then he extended his hand and said:

"Howdy, Lije? I was spectin' yo'. I reckon yo've got a razor in the house? Yo' might shave yo'rself to-morrer and comb yo'r ha'r. To-morrer night, long 'bout nine o'clock, yo' might show up at the big chestnut. That's all, Lije. Go in and see the folks."

When Sunday morning came Lije's mother knew that it was his last day. She asked no questions, but she knew. She redoubled her motherly attentions, but of all the words spoken none referred to the subject nearest their hearts. After breakfast he shaved for the first time in a year. Then he took some coon's fat and soot and greased his boots. It was nearly noon before he tore a fly-leaf out of an old book, and with a stub of a pencil sat down on the floor and after much mental and physical effort wrote a few words. When he had finished he folded the paper up and handed it to the mother.

"It's fur Lize," he said as she looked an enquiry. "It's fur Lize — after I'm gone."

The woman turned and walked across the room to the family clock, and opening the door she dropped the note in and started the half-stopped pendulum into full swing again. Then she turned and held out her hand to her son. He took it in a careless way and looked over her shoulder out of the open door. When he dropped the hand he walked out and down to the road. She was standing in the door, as he knew, but he did not look back and she did not call out. The afternoon was spent gossiping with the men and women and playing with the children. When supper time came he sat down with the family at Uncle Ben's. He was there at seven o'clock, and at eight, and up to a half-hour later. Then he rose and yawned and stretched and said he guessed he'd jog along. There was hand-shaking and all bade him good-night. At nine o'clock to the minute he was under the big chestnut tree. He drew himself up, caught his breath once or twice and clenched his fingers, and then he stared into the darkness and waited. He neither looked for men nor listened for footsteps. He neither defied nor begged for mercy. He knew that some one was there in the bushes — the hiding man knew that he was there. He thought of Lize — of the note in the clock — and waited — and waited — !

. . . . .

"Fur yewr saik," read the note which was placed in the hands of Lize Tillman two or three days later. She wondered and speculated, but she might not have solved the puzzle had she not gone down to Bristol to make a few final purchases for the wedding. There she met a citizen who told her enough to excite her suspicions as to who the real culprit was. She at once set out for home. Uncle Ben was asleep in his chair when she arrived, and her mother was at a neighbor's. Meacham, as she knew, was cutting wood at a point half a mile away. With the ill-spelled note in her bosom and a rifle on her shoulder she started up the mountain. The blows of the axe became clearer as she advanced, and she finally stood beside the man who wielded it. He greeted her with a glad shout, but she was pale-faced and her eyes glistened.

"Read that!" she said as she thrust the note into his hand.

"And now explain why you were smoking and drinking and visiting with a revenue officer three days before we lost the still!"

His face grew white and his hand trembled so that he lost his hold of the note and it fluttered to the ground. He had not knowingly betrayed the still, but all along he had had a feeling that he had chattered in his cups. He had wondered why Lije did not protest his innocence if not guilty, and now here was a scrawl that explained all. Lije was shackelty and ornary, but he made a heroic sacrifice. He had assumed the guilt and gone to his death for the sake of Lize.

"You traitor!" hissed the girl as she noticed his signs of trepidation — "you traitor and coward and skulker!"

He held up his hand in protest and would have spoken, but she pointed down the valley and said:

"Go! Go now!"

For ten seconds he looked into her face in hope to find a line of weakness. It was as hard as iron. Then he stuck his axe into the log, picked up the jacket he had thrown off, and with a groan on his lips he headed down the mountain. As he went, the girl dropped on one knee and brought the rifle to her face. She was bringing the sights fair between his shoulders, and her finger was pressing the trigger, when a great sob rose in her throat, her eyes overflowed, and she laid down the gun and moaned:

"I can't do it! I can't do it! He chattered and betrayed us, and he let Lije go to his death, but I have loved him — I love him! No! No!"

And rising to her feet she picked up her note and tore it in pieces and tossed them aloft, and like snow-flakes the bits of paper went flying after the man who had gone out of her sight and her life forever.

The Music of Money.*

BY NEWT NEWKIRK.

BAPTISTE LACROIX was weazened, withered, little and old when he came alone from France to New Orleans. He died there, but that was in 1801, so his story has been lost to the world in the years that have passed. Baptiste LaCroix had a god — Baptiste LaCroix loved but one kind of music — his god was money and his music was the chink of the shining metal.

Often, as he walked, Baptiste thrust his hands into his pockets and ran his trembling fingers among a few coins he always carried, so that they would clink together. Then his eyes would dilate, his step would quicken and over his seared face would creep a smile, but it was a smile that chilled — the smile of a miser. He never did this within the hearing of any one but himself. Baptiste was selfish of his music, and besides, he feigned to be poor — so poor that the covering was worn off the buttons on his coat and the cloth upon his elbows thin and polished with long service — so poor that he scarcely bought food sufficient to sustain him, and therefore he sometimes went hungry. He was often called a beggar and was as often pleased, for if the world believed him poor the world would not rob him. Poor Baptiste!

He brought with him from over the sea two chests which were bound in iron, and stout. They were small, but they were heavy. In the old French Quarter of New Orleans the miser bought a house. The reason he bought it was because the house was put up at sale to satisfy a creditor and went for a song. The building was not large — certainly not beautiful — but it was strong, the walls were thick, and that sufficed. Into this house the miser moved the two chests and within it he lived, its sole tenant.

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When the nights were dark he would close the shutters, bolt the door and, by the light of a sputtering candle, unlock the chests and filter through his trembling fingers the gold and silver coins that filled them, until his heart would pound in unwonted rhythm to their music. Baptiste would then relock the chests, push them under his bed, tie the keys about his neck, blow out the candle and creep to bed, where the blended echoes of gold and silver would lull him to sleep. When there was a moon, enough light filtered through the windows to make the candle an expensive luxury. Moonlight cost him nothing.

Baptiste began to look about him for some means whereby he might add to his hoard of wealth; the more money, the merrier music. There were profits to be made in the traffic of slaves. He investigated and learned that men about him had become rich in that business; they had made money that might as well have been his. But the buying and selling of slaves had a risk that terrified him. These blacks were ill-treated and ill-fed; many of them were old and one or more might die on his hands. The loss of their lives was nothing but — the loss of profits! He wished he could have bought and sold their souls, for he had heard somewhere that souls never die.

The conditions, however, were before him and he must risk if he would win. He bought with the marvellous eye of a miser, in a small way at first, but, as he learned the tricks of the trade, more extensively. Baptiste was a modest middleman. He knew where to put his hands on such slaves as his patrons wanted. He dealt in fathers, mothers, sons and daughters as if they had been so many sheep or cattle. He bought low; he sold high, and prospered, but in such a quiet way that few seemed to know who he was or where he lived.

Baptiste, in his best years, had never accumulated money so rapidly. He saved it, all but the trifle on which he lived, and in time filled a third chest. The music grew the sweeter and the more mellow as his hoard increased and as his creeping age enfeebled him. The time came when it required all his strength to drag the smallest chest from under the bed so that he might sift the coins and hear them ring. The exertion spent his strength and he often wished it were possible to sit idly by and yet hear

the clinking of the coins. As he pondered over the idea of the money making its own music a plan unfolded itself and Baptiste resolved to adopt it straightway, even if it should cost something.

The next day and for many days thereafter, workmen were busy in the miser's home. Baptiste followed them about and directed. When they had finished, the result of their labors stood in the centre of the room where he ate and slept. It was massively built, stone upon stone, from the ground beneath the floor to the height of nine feet. Its other dimensions were three feet each way, making its horizontal section square. Its walls were six inches thick, leaving an interior two and one-half feet square in which a man might stand erect and turn about. The inside was metal-lined. There was a solitary barred window, a few inches square, in one wall of the structure, within arm's reach from the inside, that admitted a shaft of light. There was also a heavy, swinging panel door that locked with a great key, through which a man might squeeze within the walls. Above, and with its apex hanging downward on the inside, was a metal hopper as large as the top of the structure. The slot in the apex of this hopper was the thickness and width of a current gold or silver coin. Baptiste's triumph might have passed for a huge stone chimney, but it was a money music box and, at the same time, a vault.

The miser had only to carry his coin in small loads up the ladder against the outside, empty them into the hopper, release the mechanism at the slot, which would drop the pieces at whatever pace desired, and listen in idle ectasy to their music as they dripped within the vault, rolling and ringing in sweetest symphony. There was something almost pathetic in the childish way poor old Baptiste would unlock the vault door at night, carry a few gold and silver burdens aloft to the hopper, release the slide at the slot and then sit crouched outside the walls, listening to the money's music.

The miser had been blessed with a most profitable week in his slave traffic. He counted his earnings with excited fingers on Sabbath morning and promised himself a concert, the like of which he had never heard, on that very day. Going up and down the ladder was toilsome work for a feeble old man like Baptiste, but the

promised music seemed to lend unusual strength to his tottering legs and palsied hands. How many times he crept aloft burdened with coin he knew not, but at last his wealth lay gleaming in the hopper and the vault was empty.

Then Baptiste set the slot at a measured pace, went down the ladder for the last time and, sliding through the open panel door, pulled it slowly to and locked it on the inside. He even removed the key and placed it on the ledge of the single window which lighted the interior, as if it were safer there. The miser's grand concert was under way. The coins fell at his feet and rolled about with ringing accents. Baptiste crouched in the corner and closed his eyes, so that vision might not share with hearing. The music thrilled, then soothed, his tired faculties, and at length his white head nodded and Baptiste slept.

. . . . . .

When the miser opened his eyes he knew not for the instant where he was, until his ear caught the sound of the coins which were yet falling. He was chilled and aching with the sensation of a great weight bearing him down. He tried to rise from his cramped posture, but his stiffened limbs responded weakly and it was with difficulty that he shook off the weight and struggled to his feet. Then he reeled and would have fallen had not the close walls of the vault supported him. He was seized with a choking sensation, and in nervous haste stretched his thin hand upward toward the key which lay on the window ledge.

His trembling fingers touched it — pushed it through the bars — where it hung balancing an instant, and then fell *on the outside.*

As the key struck the floor it rang with a clink that seemed to mock the clink of the falling coins within.

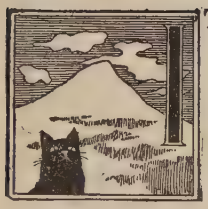
As the full significance of the miser's situation forced itself upon him, his knees gave way and he sank in a limp and motionless heap — a prisoner with his wealth. His eyes were closed and his head rested sidewise on his knees, directly under the slot. Each falling coin struck him on the temple and glanced against the metal lining of the vault with a ring. Baptiste was yet conscious, but without the power to move. The coins smote him with pendulum-like regularity, until each one pained like a knife-

thrust and then jingled merrily to rest among its fellows. At length the money's music came to him indistinctly, as if it were a great way off, and he felt the pain no longer. Baptiste was drifting — drifting in a golden ship over a golden sea. The shimmering waters rocked him gently, while the waves covered him with their glittering spray. Then Baptiste fell into a sleep — a sleep wherein the heart stops and the flickering light of life goes out.

The coins continued to fall in measured accents, chanting a weird requiem and wasting their music within that prison sepulchre.

The Diamond Drill and Mary.*

BY H. J. W. DAM.



IT was in the city of Virginia, in the State of Nevada.

The 1200-foot level of the Empire mine on the Comstock Lode had been run from the main shaft one hundred feet to the eastward. The level had been timbered up like a tunnel nearly the whole of the way. Beyond the timbering was an open space, an underground room in the solid rock, about ten feet long, six feet wide and eight high. The end of the level or face of the drift represented fifteen feet more of rock, yet unexcavated, which belonged to the Empire. Then came the boundary line and every inch of rock beyond belonged by law to the adjoining mine, the Northern Star.

This subterranean room was lighted by three candles in miners' iron candlesticks whose sharp-pointed ends were stuck into crevices in the wet, gray rock. Old Jack Nicholson, a bent, aged and white-bearded Cornishman, was connecting a feed pipe with a diamond drill set against the face of the drift. Another miner, a Scotchman named Provines, was oiling the drill bearings. The

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $150 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

third man was Grice, the superintendent of the mine. The task in hand was the exploration, by boring through it with the drill, of the fifteen feet of rock. If there was no silver ore there the rock was not worth excavating and would be abandoned. The work was a bit of ordinary routine and the men, as it proceeded, thought of nothing in particular.

But within a few feet of them, hidden by that wet gray wall, were millions upon millions of the wealth that makes men mad.

"Let her go, Jack," said Grice, and Nicholson turned the screw.

There was a clatter and whir as the compressed air set the drill in motion, which sound changed to a lower note as the ring of black diamonds set in steel began to cut its way into the virgin rock. The boring speed was about a foot per hour. The drill cut a hole in the shape of a ring, leaving untouched, as it went inward, a core or cylinder of rock about an inch in diameter, which broke off and came away whenever the drill was withdrawn. This core enabled the workers to know the kind of rock passed through, and whether it was silver-bearing or not.

"You'll be on till five in the morning, you two," said Grice.

"Yes, sir."

"Very good." He took his candle, walked away along the level to the shaft, entered the cage, which came lumbering up out of the darkness of the lower regions, and was taken to the surface. Here he changed his wet and muddy clothes for a jaunty suit of tweeds and a Panama straw hat. He walked with a springy step down the grade into Virginia City, and as he walked he thought of Mary.

Grice was something over thirty and a good-looking man in a manly sort of way. He was of middle height, but broad shouldered and heavily built, with a sharp, pleasant blue eye, a crisp, glistening yellow moustache and a strong, firm mouth. And Grice was in love, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, with Mary Conness.

Mrs. Conness, the mother, kept the Washington Boarding House, his home. She was a languid widow who had seen better days and wore very much too much brown hair and carelessly painted eyebrows. In contrast with her mother, Mary was a pearl

of purest ray serene. She had liquid brown eyes, such as her mother's had been, a firm, full bust, and was a type of health, animation and activity. She had a smile like a Madonna, and was twenty years old. The boarders, all men, simply worshipped her. Their bills, which were heavy, were paid without a murmur, and it was believed that they all kissed Mary's signature with rapture on the first of every month.

Grice's passion for Mary was six months old. All the dozen other boarders stood back in silence in the presence of Grice and Hart, her other suitor. John Hart was the superintendent of the Northern Star. He was a big, brawny, black-bearded Irishman from the North of Ireland. He was a rich man, a large owner in his mine, while Grice had only his five hundred dollars per month as superintendent. The mother, loving money, favored Hart. Mary secretly favored Grice. Hart was too hard, and his sneering, domineering quality was against him. Grice and Hart were friendly enough, but had little to say to each other. They were reserved in their manner with the reserve of two iron wills set on the same object, which they well knew would lead to a death struggle sooner or later. All of the other boarders knew perfectly well that neither man would ever marry Mary till the other was dead. This made life at the Washington piquantly interesting, and Ed Varney, the faro dealer, familiar through his business with calculations in the domain of the higher mathematics, said the odds were about even and he'd lay either way and had no choice.

This was the condition of affairs when about twelve o'clock that night a ragged and barefoot boy, panting and breathless, came tearing down from the Empire to the boarding house. He rang the bell repeatedly and finally awoke Mary, who answered the door.

"Please'm, Mr. Grice. I'm from the mine."

"What's happened?" shouted Grice, also awakened, over the banisters.

"I'm to see you alone, sir."

"Come up here."

Grice went back into his room and lighted a candle. He was in his nightshirt. The boy came in and shut the door.

"Grandad sent you this, sir," he said, holding out a grayish-black rod of rock about a foot long. "I was to take it to you as quick as God'd let me."

Grice took the rock and held it to the candle. As his eye fell on it he started as if he had received an electric shock. His face paled, his eyes opened wide and seemed to start from his head. "Great God!" he said, under his breath.

The rod was the richest ore known to the Comstock, gray-black, glistening, eighty per cent. solid silver.

He turned sharply to the boy. "Does Provines know it?"

"No," said the sharp-witted messenger. "Grandad told me to tell you he'd sent him up for a crank shaft which he'd never find."

And thus it was that the only persons who knew of it were Grice, Old Jack and the boy.

It was four in the morning. Grice had stood by the drill, fascinated, hour after hour. Finally, still in the same rich ore, it reached the Northern Star boundary. Old Jack stopped it and looked at him, questioning. It was a most vital question.

"Go on," said Grice. His mind was made up. He was going to explore Hart's mine, as Hart could not, the deepest level of the Northern Star being a hundred feet above them.

It was extremely wrong, of course, but a fortune and Mary were at stake. The laws of morality are largely matters of geography. If Grice had failed to take advantage of his opportunity he would have been suspected, in Virginia, not of high integrity but more probably of softening of the brain.

At six in the morning Grice stopped the drill. The two men were alone, as they wished to be, in the darkness of the earth. They both spoke with constraint, overstrung by the enormous wealth that seemed to be a living presence by their side.

"It's one of the big ones, Jack."

"Yes, sir."

"And nearly all in the Northern Star ground."

"Yes, sir."

"Jack, how much money do you want?"

"I'm nearly done myself, sir. But I've two daughters. I'd like to leave them and their babies well fixed."

"Well! Put a figure on it."

"Forty thousand dollars?"

"Say fifty. Is it a go?"

"Yes, sir."

"You'll not quit this drill till you're through the ore body?"

"No, sir."

"And not a soul shall know of it."

"No, sir."

"Shake." The bargain was made.

"I'm going to San Francisco. You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Every time you add a ten-foot rod to the drill, you're to send me a telegram to the Pacific Club. Simply telegraph the distance in ore. When you get through it wire 'Ended.'"

"Yes, sir."

"Then good-bye; your fifty thousand depends on you."

Grice went home, his brain in a dull fever. He packed his bag and was coming downstairs at seven o'clock to drive to the railway station when he saw Mary cross the hall and go into the sitting-room. He followed her in, still carrying his bag, and shut the door behind him.

"Mary," he said, and then he stopped. His voice failed him. She started, frightened. His face was pale, his features were strange, and his voice was husky, seemingly beyond his control.

"Are you ill? What's the matter?"

"Don't bother about me," he said more quietly. "Mary, I want to ask you a question. May I?"

The tears sprang to her eyes. She knew all about the question — as women do.

"Yes," she said, faintly.

The question came slowly, every word an effort. All his hope in life depended on the answer. "Do you love me, Mary?"

Poor Mary tried to say something, but her voice was not working just then. She proceeded to burst out crying. He ought to have put his arms around her, but he did not know that. It was awkward. She only cried nervously.

"I — I've got to catch the train; I must, Mary. Am I — am I wrong?" he asked in sinking fear.

"No! Oh, NO!" said Mary. It was easier to say "No" than "Yes."

Grice dropped his bag and folded her in his arms. He held her to him hungrily. "God bless you. God bless you," was all he could say. "We'll be married, Mary, married the minute I get back." He looked at her, his eyes full of yearning.

There came on her face a smile that was almost heavenly. It was like the strong sunlight glowing in a church window. His eyes and heart drank in the smile. They were satisfied. He released her and hurried away to the train.

And Mary, with everything in the world to occupy her on that busy morning, sat down, and laughed and cried by turns. The man's passion had infected her like a fever. But she was strangely happy. She seemed to float on air. She forgot everything in the world but Grice and herself, and half an hour afterwards was standing, gazing absorbed into the mirror, wondering how a girl like her could make a man love her like that.

"*Well!*" said her mother in indignation and astonishment, standing in the doorway in a horribly new green and yellow dressing gown.

Whereupon Mary came down from the clouds and instantly went to market, just as if that morning were just like every other morning of all the days of her life.

. . . . .

At ten o'clock that evening Grice arrived at San Francisco, took a carriage on the ferry-wharf and was driven to a mansion in the western addition of the city. He rang the bell, and was shown into the study of Mr. Joshua Harbin, who was waiting for him, advised by telegram. Mr. Joshua Harbin was a very tall and very thin man about sixty-eight years old, dressed in black broadcloth. His hair was a sandy color, cut short, and was turning to a greenish gray. He had a pale eye, something between light blue and hazel, and a soft, slow voice.

"I've got a very big thing, Harbin," said Grice, sharply. "I want your capital to handle it."

"Y-e-es," said Mr. Harbin, sleepily.

Mr. Harbin had a slow and sleepy manner. Perhaps hawks have such a manner when they sail over a rabbit warren.

Grice told his story. He took from his bag, and showed to Harbin, fifteen feet of broken core from the drill. Mr. Harbin was unmoved. He handled the ore tenderly, almost politely. Two red spots, however, made themselves apparent in his cheeks, and his old heart beat so fast that he took a drink, sipping it very quietly, to help the organ along.

"Now, shall we get to business?" said Mr. Harbin, tenderly.

They discussed brokers, combinations and many other things connected with the Stock Exchange, for hours. Northern Star stock was selling at a dollar. Upon the announcement of the discovery it would be worth many hundreds. Their plan was to buy all of it that could be obtained, and keep on buying as long as it showed a profit.

During the next and the following days Grice and Harbin slept little. Harbin had a million ready to use in their operations, and day and night his brain was working coldly, steadily, but rapidly, as it loved to. Grice's eyes were watching every throb of the market, and a dozen different men, unknown to each other, were giving orders for him, buying and selling, to a dozen different brokers. He nursed the market like the most skilful lady in white cap and apron that ever received a nurse's certificate. The stock was coming in in thousands of shares, and not a cent was being wasted. And every now and then the spots in the old man's cheeks burned deeper and redder with excitement as he read Old Jack's string of telegrams, each one showing the great ore body to be bigger and bigger and the vista of millions wider and wider.

The telegrams were simply:

"Twenty!"

"Thirty!"

"Forty!"

"Fifty!"

Fifty feet of almost solid silver in the greatest pocket the Comstock had ever seen.

"When he gets through the ore body we must be ready to let the news leak out," Harbin said gently to his partner.

But it leaked without their aid. Old Jack had sent off "Sixty," "Seventy" and "Eighty," and when he next drew out the core he had come to the end. It was country rock. But he

sent no telegram of "Ended." He tried to, but the old man had not the strength. The San Francisco papers had the full story next morning, under startling black head-lines, taking columns and whole pages of the sensational issues with such "scare" headings as:—

DEAD AT HIS POST.
Tremendous Discovery on the Comstock Lode.
Bonanza in the Northern Star.
Millions Upon Millions.
An Empire Drill Cuts Eighty-three Feet of Solid Ore on the 1200.

The bombshell had burst, but Old Jack's ears had not heard it. He had died under the strain upon heart and nerves. But the children were provided for, and the old grandfather slept sweetly and peacefully, lying there in the darkness of the 1200, with a rod in his hand and his back against the drill.

Of how the market went mad and the stock jumped upward it is not necessary to tell. It was only repeating history. The stock had closed at 27 the night before. It opened at 60, jumped to 100, and was bought and sold wildly all day long up to 180. Two days later it was at 300. The next day it was over 400 and steadied itself for a time at that figure, and then went upward.

Harbin, a miracle of vigilance, coolness and energy, sold enough Northern Star shares to make about two and a half million dollars of cash profits. And he and Grice still held shares which at ruling values represented more than double that amount.

Sitting alone in Harbin's private office, Grice went over the balance sheet carefully. Then he settled back and looked at a new world in a new light.

Like magic his dreams had been realized. He was a millionaire. And the millions were lighted with a softer, more glowing radiance by the smile of a girl in a boarding house, the smile that had been given him as these days of wonderful changes had begun.

. . . . . .

The history of Hart during this period was the change from sneering, triumphant sanity to anger amounting to madness, blazing, wild and uncontrollable.

The revelation of Old Jack's death and the tremendousness of the discovery came upon him like a thunderbolt. The rush of

blood to his head nearly choked him and the rush back to the heart made him dizzy. He tore out of his office without a word and strode madly in a straight line up the mountain, striving to find an outlet in action for the impulses which ravaged him like wild animals.

He had been tricked, beaten, made into a laughing-stock by the man he already hated fiercely. He had lost millions which should and would have been his, and he had lost the girl. That he would fail to kill Grice was the only thought that could now stab him, but he had no doubt of this, and he would have been ready to kill any other man who suggested it.

He dared not leave Virginia, for fear of missing Grice on his return. Forced to do something, he began to drink, and this kept him within bounds. He drank wildly and madly. All the town were waiting for Grice and the duel, and thus three days passed.

Poor Mary, who knew all, and saw all that was coming, had lain awake the whole night trembling and in tears. She had telegraphed Grice his danger, but how to save him — how to save him — how to save him, was the terrible question printed in letters of light upon the darkness into which she stared.

It was five o'clock in the morning. She heard Hart, with two other men almost as intoxicated as himself, surge heavily along the hallway and enter his room. She stole out of bed, slipped on a wrapper, tiptoed to Hart's door and listened.

"I'll kill him," snarled Hart, in drunken fury. "I'll kill him, I tell you. I'll kill the ——— as soon as he sets foot in Virginia."

She staggered back to her room almost fainting with fright. The two men went away. She waited till half past six o'clock, and then rose and dressed.

She went over to the gunsmith's shop opposite. She knew the clerk, and found him taking down the shutters.

"Have you any blank revolver cartridges?"

"What size?"

"Colt — Colt 44, I think."

"Plenty." They were used to show ignorant purchasers how to load their revolvers without a superfluous tragedy.

Mary went back with five blank ball cartridges. She stopped at Hart's door and listened. He was snoring in a heavy, sodden,

drunken sleep. She went softly in. His revolver lay on the bureau. Trembling, with bated breath, she took out the five cartridges and slipped the blanks into their places. As she laid the pistol down they looked exactly like the others.

She closed the door gently, flew back to her room, and falling on her knees by the bedside breathed a prayer of agonized thanks. Like a brave and loving girl, doing her best in a strictly masculine matter, she had muddled things very considerably. Her lover, when attacked, would now in all probability shoot and kill an unarmed man, and be in a very unpleasant position indeed.

It was Tuesday evening. The big octagon clock at the back of the bar in Ormerod's saloon made it a quarter past nine.

This saloon, the best known and highest class establishment of its kind in Virginia, was a large, high room with a mahogany bar running the entire length of the right-hand side. A row of barrels ran along the left-hand side, with a passage back of them to a door. There was no other, except the large centre one.

The place was packed with men and filled with cigar smoke, the smell of rye whiskey and the hum of excited conversation. The strike in Northern Star was one of those events which at irregular periods completely turned the head of the city, and added to it was the feud between Grice and Hart. Both men were personally known to everybody, and Grice was popular. All the talk turned upon the meeting, with conjectures as to where it would take place and the outcome. That one or both were sure to "go under" nobody doubted. The sympathies were with Grice. The ethical question as to the propriety of his action did not occur to anybody. He was regarded as being in big luck and as having cleverly utilized his opportunity.

The place blazed with gaslight, and three bar-keepers in white jackets, their oiled hair plastered down upon their foreheads in arabesques of consummate beauty, were busy pushing bottles, glasses and cigar boxes along the sloppy bar. This was fronted by a line of men three deep, and the drinking was incessant. At the lower end of the bar farthest from the door was Hart, his face pale, his eyes bloodshot, and his expression set, wild and bloodthirsty. He was drinking with a couple of friends and planning the events of the morrow.

Without the slightest warning a firm, rasping voice rang out cheerily, "Good evening, gentlemen." Grice, in a black felt hat and brown overcoat, stood in the doorway.

The effect can scarcely be described. The place was so crowded that movement was difficult, and every man knew that in a moment bullets would be flying wildly. There was only one door, Grice and, of course, his pistol filling the other. Half a dozen men vaulted over the bar, sweeping bottles and glasses with them, and landing on top of the bar-keepers, who had thrown themselves flat at the word. The rest of the men, in a wild scrambling scrimmage, rushed together like stampeded cattle to get out of the line of fire. Half threw themselves to the floor and the other half fell over them or ran over them, or fell sprawling in an inextricable mass. All this took place in a second and pandemonium reigned.

At the sound of Grice's voice Hart whipped out his pistol. The instant the disappearing crowd opened a lane between them he began to shoot.

Grice was taken completely by surprise. He fully expected a desperate encounter with Hart, but had no fear whatever of assassination. According to the iron law of custom and the requirements of a coroner's jury, Hart was bound to warn him; to telegraph or write or verbally say, "Heel yourself," prior to attack. His overcoat was buttoned closely around him. He tried to draw his pistol, but before he could get it from his hip pocket, click-click-click-click-click went Hart's pistol, and five shots, any one of which would have been his death, had failed to explode.

With a furious oath Hart hurled his useless pistol at Grice and sprang forward with a knife. But Grice's pistol now covered him and Grice's finger was on the trigger. Hart stopped, motionless, his knife raised in the air.

The crowd held its breath. The position of affairs was new. By all the recognized rights Hart's life belonged to Grice, but still it did not seem possible that Grice could take it.

Grice with his pistol levelled stood thinking. At a nod from him Hart dropped his knife to the floor.

"I'll give you a chance," said Grice, quietly. "Go out there."

Hart marched out through the doorway into the moonlit street.

Grice glanced at Ed Varney with a significant nod. The crowd understood and grinned. They knew that Hart, a would-be murderer, was to be run out of town and that they were invited to assist at the function. They followed, chuckling and drawing their revolvers.

"Take thirty paces and then run for your life," said Grice.

Hart, now trembling, livid, clinging to life as the vital instinct clings, marched thirty paces down the middle of the street, Grice counting them aloud. Then Grice's pistol cracked, but a second before Hart bent low and ran like a deer. Then other pistols cracked rapidly in a scattering roar, but no bullet touched him. They were not meant to. In a frenzy of fear and hope, Hart ran like an arrow into the night, out of range and out of Virginia for ever. He was never seen in Nevada again.

Grice started for home. At the first corner a girl, hatless and cloakless, waiting in the shadow, gave a low cry and fell fainting into his arms.

He clasped her to him in silence, looked up at the blue-black sky, and humbly, for the first time in his life, thanked Heaven for its blessing and its mercy.

They walked onward, Mary still weak and trembling and Grice supporting her. A little later, in the sitting-room, he told Mary of his providential escape. Then Mary told him something.

He started up as if he had been stung. He was pale with the thought of what might have been.

"But — but — what should I have done?" asked Mary, ready to cry. He looked as if she had done him an injury.

"You — you've saved my life, dear," said Grice, solemnly. "But don't — don't you ever do it again. It — er — it complicates matters."

Which shows once more that no lord of creation will ever appreciate what a woman does for him.

Hans Kremler's Anniversary.*

BY ELISABETH F. DYE.

RS. JOE KREMLER sat in her rocking chair on the little platform that extended across the front of the toll house, and, with its arbor of honeysuckle and wistaria, did duty as a veranda. Her husband's half-patched trousers lay upon her knee and her basket of mending sat beside her, but the usually busy hands were folded idly, and her rocking chair, that was wont to swing in rhythm to her stitches while she worked, rested motionless. In the quiet of the September afternoon the autumn haze shadowed the distant valleys and wreathed the hill tops in a warm and tender mist. From the field across the road came the sound of the reaper and the faint calls of the men to their horses, as they moved down the hillside, leaving a path of lighter green in the sea of fragrant clover; faint calls that seemed to accentuate the dreaminess and quiet that brooded over all.

Across the distance of the field Mrs. Kremler could just distinguish the figures of her little daughters of five and seven years, who, with joined hands, followed with careful though

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $300 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

joyous steps directly in the wake of the mower on which their father was mounted, guiding the horses up and down the somewhat steep hillside. Mrs. Kremler twisted her hands hard together for a moment as she noticed, when the mower reached the top of the hill, how stooped and old her husband's stalwart figure looked, and she caught her breath with a half-sob as she saw the gleam of the white marbles in the country churchyard on the hill beyond, and remembered that at last year's September mowing her husband's figure had loomed straight and tall against the sky when he neared the hill top, and behind him, guiding the rake, rode proudly for the first time little Hans. Little Hans, her first child and her only son; how clearly during the last eight months had the stones of that little graveyard gleamed out in her perspective!

She took her thimble and resumed applying the patch, but the sight of the white stones on the far away hillside was too much for her, and she dropped her head on her knees and sobbed aloud. Not since the first shock of the blow had her loss seemed harder to bear than this afternoon; for little Hans's birthday came on just such a day a this, nine years before. The wonder and joy of that time, when she had first held him in her arms, came clearly with the breath of the clover from the field across the way, and made the emptiness and the loneliness the harder to bear. Her little girls she loved dearly, but they were not like Hans, her first-born; the glory that had come into her life with her first child could never be equalled — never be forgotten — and the memory of his approaching birthday brought a grief too poignant for her to bear. Only to have him back once more, only to see him once, not for her sake alone, she prayed, but also for Joe's sake. For it seemed sometimes to the little woman that she had lost both husband and son, so great had been the change wrought by grief in Joe.

From the jolly, merry-hearted husband who, although years older than herself, had shared her every joy and pleasure, Joe had grown to be a stern, repressed and moody man, who sometimes looked as though the laughter of the little girls hurt him, and who went no more among his fellows, and hardly responded to his neighbors' greeting. Even the little church where they had worshipped knew him no more, and while he never spoke of his

reason for giving up his church-going, Jenny well understood the hardness that had come into his life. She dared not beg him to go with her when she started with the little girls on Sunday morning, but left him with a look upon his face that somehow reminded her of the limestone rocks that rose above the road where the quarry had once been. As she wept with bowed head and thought of the approaching anniversary, a sense of the unreality of the last months came unconsciously over her, and as the breath of the grape and the sweet odors of autumn that sun and the first light frosts distil and render into the balm of Indian summer stole in upon her, it seemed finally that there must be some way to bring the old time back again — some way in which they might think of the little Hans with joy — so that the thought of that awful night with the croup, and the hour in the frozen graveyard that followed would not be the last in their memory of him.

Though Jenny Kremler had listened obediently to the preaching in the little Church of the Disciples upon the hill upon all the Sundays of the last eight months, her mind had never grasped those heavenly promises and dreams with which the old minister had sought to comfort her. From the pew where she sat she had looked out through the window upon the little grave-mound that held so much of her life, and had been able to realize nothing beyond it. And to-day her mind turned from the thought of the minister's words of angelic choirs with a start of something like the old joy to the thought of little Hans back in his old place again by her side in the sunshine — and she ceased weeping and sat erect, while a sudden flush rose to her brown cheeks at the thought that came to her. After the dull longing of the past months for all those vanished cares which a child brings into one's life, the thought of this one more duty, which would almost seem to bring his presence again, came with a throb so strange and sweet that it brought almost a smile to her eyes.

She finished her patching with trembling fingers. Then, when she had put her work away, she took a white apron and hoisted it on a pole on the fence across the road, which was her way of signalling to the little girls when they were in the field or at the tobacco barn with their father.

A few minutes later, when they came tumbling in, breathless

from running down the hill, she had put her sunbonnet on, and placed in a basket the six pairs of curtains that she had "done up" for Mis' Ellie up at The Place. Down underneath the starchy freshness of the ruffled swiss, in the bottom of the big basket was a little one, containing a bag of flour, a cupful of brown sugar and two eggs. "Now, Emma honey," she said to her eldest girl, "I'm goin' to take Mis' Ellie's curtains home, an' you and Maggie mus' jus' sit here on the step an' take the toll till I come back, an' put the kettle on, honey, so's I kin git supper when I git back."

After which parting injunction, she climbed the stile that led into the orchard belonging to The Place and began the ascent of the somewhat steep hill. Usually this hillside climb was a matter of several rests, while she looked about her and unconsciously breathed in the beauty of the old orchard, with its gnarled trunks and heavy fruitage; but to-day she walked rapidly, unconscious of her heavy basket, for she was thinking of what old Aunt Mandy, the black cook of Mis' Ellie's had told her about the birthday cake she had made for Mis' Ellie's nephew.

When Jenny Kremler had come from the mountain region, a bride of eighteen years of age, ten years ago, with her husband, to keep the toll gate on the Perry road, she had looked with an awed and somewhat reverential admiration at the big house on the hill top, at the foot of which the little toll house stood.

Since then her respect and admiration for the mistress of The Place had grown, and her love for her knew no bounds, for in every extremity Mis' Ellie had stood a guardian angel. When her children had come, their scanty wardrobe was enlarged from the laid aside wardrobe of Mis' Ellie's children. When the tobacco crop had failed, Mis' Ellie had always found work for Joe or herself, and when Joe had the fever it was Mis' Ellie who sent for her own doctor to come and prescribe for him. In little Hans's last illness, it was she who was sent for in the dead of the night for advice, and who had performed all those tender offices for the little child, and essayed to comfort the grieving little family. So that it had become a habit to go up to The Place for help or advice of any sort, and old Mandy, the cook, was never surprised to find her sitting patiently on the kitchen porch waiting to be

announced. To-day, however, she had no need to wait, for as she came up the path from the orchard, she saw on the veranda just outside the kitchen door Mrs. Payne, sitting surrounded by baskets containing large and luscious pears, which she was peeling and transferring to a waiting kettle of polished copper, while through the open door of the kitchen issued the savory odor of cooking fruit, and old Mandy could be seen busily stirring two large kettles of preserves over the fire.

"Howdy, Mis' Ellie," said Mrs. Kremler, rather faintly, aware for the first time of the heaviness of the basket and the weariness of the climb, "I done fotch home you all's washin'."

"Why, Mrs. Kremler, you look tired; why didn't you wait and make Joe carry it for you?" said Mrs. Payne, looking up from her work, and noticing keenly how tired and worn the little woman looked.

"Well, Joe he's over mowin' Mr. Jack's meadow, and besides, I wanted to fotch them myself, fer" — then, rather hurriedly and in a somewhat lower tone — "I'm goin' to give Joe a surprise, Mis' Ellie. Is you'uns all well?"

When Mrs. Payne had responded that they all enjoyed their usual health, and when Mandy had left the enormous ladle, which she had been wielding so energetically, poised on the side of the kettle, and had gone up the long veranda and into the house with the basket of curtains, Mrs. Kremler turned uneasily on the step on which she sat, so that Mrs. Payne could not look into her eyes, and after contemplating for a moment the frolics of a couple of kittens at her feet, said in rather a low voice, "I don't want no pay for them 'ar courtains, Mis' Ellie; I jus' want yer ter do something for me."

"Don't want any pay, Mrs. Kremler! Perhaps I can do that something for you and pay you for the curtains, too."

Mrs. Kremler turned her face farther from Mrs. Payne as she said, "Mis' Ellie, do you know what day day after to-morrer will be?' 'Twill be little Hans's birthday."

"So it will, Mrs. Kremler; I was thinking that it came just about this time as I saw you coming up the path," replied Mrs. Payne, eyeing with tender pity the fingers that were nervously working at her bonnet strings.

"Then you didn't fergit, Mis' Ellie — I was afraid you had. Mis' Ellie, if I done thought we'd ever fergit, hit would drive me mad. I jus' puzzle over it every day how we kin remember little Hans; that is," she said stumblingly, "keep a-remembering him, so's we don't fergit him, you know, and there don't seem no way 'cept jes' to set and think about him. But Mis' Ellie, I do want to remember his birthday, to show him respect, and so I thought if you could git Aunt Mandy to make a birthday cake like the one she done tole me she made Mr. James when he wus at home, we could remember his birthday that-a-way. You know I allus killed a chicken and cooked it with plenty of gravy an' give him a good dinner, but he never did have no birthday cake; I didn't never know about birthday cake tell Aunt Mandy tole me 'bout that-a-one of Mr. James's, an' that was only this summer."

"A birthday cake for your little boy that is dead, Mrs. Kremler!" said Mrs. Payne, hardly believing her ears. She said it almost reprovingly, but as Jenny turned her face and she saw the signs of sorrow there, her voice faltered in reproof — it was evident that she did not understand.

"Yes'm, you know he never had none, Mis' Ellie; hit happened I didn't know about them then — hit would a jus' tickled him. I kin jus' seem to hear him laugh when he'd see it. If I'd only a-knowed it I could hev giv it to him afore he died; seems like there's so many things I could have done fer him that I jes' found out this summer sence he's gone, that don't do him no good now, and sometimes I can't see why I didn't happen to find them out afore. But the birthday cake I want to hev; hit ain't too late to show him that respect, and if" — and her voice broke and large tears rolled slowly down her cheeks — "if it's as the minister says, an' he kin look down, he'll be mightily pleased; and maybe he wouldn't fergit us up there along with the angels."

Mrs. Payne did not respond for a minute. She was thinking of her own first-born, and the things she had learned after it was too late, and her heart went out to this poor little mountain woman.

"Certainly, my dear Mrs. Kremler, Mandy shall make you a cake, and you and your husband and children can eat it in remembrance of all the other days when you all sat around the table. I will send it down to you to-morrow."

"Oh, thanky, ma'm!" said Jenny, gratefully. Then, continuing timidly, "I ain't fotched only two eggs, Mis' Ellie; them are all I could git. I don't see why them 'ar hens don't lay no more'n they do. I don't have no call to make cake, only doughnuts, but I ain't never hearn of doughnuts for a birthday cake, and a real cake will be such a s'prise to Joe. He ain't took no pleasure lately. I ain't hear him laugh since summer."

"Huccome you brung dem aigs up here in de same basket 'long wid dem curtains, Mis' Kremler?" said Aunt Mandy, returning with the little basket poised on her capacious hand, "Don't you know dem aigs gwine git mixed up wid dem curtains an' spile 'em?

"Wuz they broke?" asked Mrs. Kremler, anxiously.

"No, dey ain't, but if I hadn't 'spicioned dey wuz somethin' in dere long wid dem curtains, frum de rattlin', dey would a broke when I set de basket down."

"Aunt Mandy," said Mrs. Payne, "Mrs. Kremler wants you to make her a nice cake to-morrow, just the nicest cake you can make."

"I never could make no nice cake like you, Aunt Mandy, an' I thought if you'd make me one like that 'ar one you made for Mr. James's birthday last summer, I'd sew up your dress fer you, an' I won't charge you nothin'."

"Law, honey," said Aunt Mandy, "I'll bake you a cake, if Mis' Ellie will let me; hit ain't nothin' bakin' cakes. I'm goin' t' bring dat cake down to you ter-morrow, Mis' Kremler."

It was late on Saturday afternoon when Aunt Mandy wended her way down the pike toward the little toll house. On her extended hands she carried the cake, carefully wrapped and swathed about, and borne much as a young baby might be; and Aunt Mandy walked with much the same air of pride that a fond mother taking her offspring out for one of its earliest airings might have done; while hanging over her right arm was the purple calico gown pattern which, in view of the fact that the cake was so complete a success, she had decided to ask Mrs. Kremler to cut out for her.

"Howdy, Mis' Kremler; I jus' come down to fotch dis yer cake," was her salutation, as she entered and deposited her burden upon the table. "I wouldn't trus' hit to none of dem chillern to bring;

dey would be takin' pinches off'n around hit, jus' lak dey did from de aige of Mis' Julie Payne's weddin' cake, dat I baked her and sont dem to carry home; dat's whut dey did," she reiterated forcibly as she unwrapped the linen bread cloths from around the cake. As it appeared, a marvel indeed of smooth and shiny whiteness, encrusted about the edges with roses made of icing, showing Aunt Mandy's most artistic touch, Mrs. Kremler's eyes grew big with delight; it was beyond her expectations.

"Dat ar' cake dun tuhned out fust rate," said Aunt Mandy, with pride. "I done tole Mis' Ellie dat hit wuz good enough fer a weddin', but Mistus said hit wuz fer a birthday cake, an' she sent along dis yere can'le to stick in de middle ob hit jus' dis-a-way," and she placed the candle with great care in the middle of the white and shining mound. "Mr. James he dun hab little can'les all around his'n, one can'le for ebery yeah he dun growed, an' a big one lak dis in de middle fer to grow on, but Mis' Ellie said you don't want only dis-a-one fer to show dat hit is a birthday cake."

"Must I light the candle?" asked Mrs. Kremler.

"Law, honey, you mus' light the can'le afore you cah'y de cake in, an' you mustn't fotch hit in untwell dey finished eatin'; den you mus' cah'y hit in an' tell dem hit is a birthday cake. I done tie on my white apron and cah'y Mr. James's cake in myself, an' dat 'ar Susan dat waits table thoughten she gwine cah'y hit in, an' when I come in I sets hit in front of Mr. James, and he cut hit, and dey all laugh and cah'y on; but hit wasn't no purtier nor no bigger dan dis-a-one."

"I ain't never seen no cake ez pretty ez that-a-one," said Mrs. Kremler, looking at it admiringly. Over and over in her mind she was thinking lovingly, "How pleased Hansie would 'a' been, how it would 'a' pleased him." Then, when Aunt Mandy had carefully wrapped the cake up, she carried it into the pantry, covered it with a basket, so that neither Joe nor the children would see it, and turned her attention to cutting out the purple gown.

When Jenny Kremler woke on the next morning, her first thought was of Joe, and she wondered whether he remembered what day it was, and whether he would speak of it to her; for since the day, months ago, when he had put his hands up implor-

ingly when she had spoken of little Hans to him, crying, "O Ma, I can't bear to talk about it!" they had not spoken of their loss. And when he came in this morning from feeding his cow and Mr. Jack's pigs, she only said, "It's goin' to be a fine day, Pa," and he replied, "Yes, the sun's come up clear; I reckoned last night that we'd have rain to-day, but it's done blowed by."

By noon Mrs. Kremler's mind was in a flutter of excitement. There was no preaching to-day, therefore there was no meeting to attend; so she busied herself all the morning in preparations for dinner. Now it was ready. Her table, on which white marbled oilcloth usually did duty, was to-day covered by her only white tablecloth. A bunch of asters that the children had brought in graced the middle of it. Her fattest pullet, the last of the lima beans, and her best preserves augmented the feast.

It had been a harder day than she thought it would be. Joe had gone, just after the morning's work was done up, to the pike, with that strained look upon his face that she felt almost fearful of. The children had gone up to Mis' Ellie's to the Sunday School class she always had on those days when there was no preaching; and she had had the little house to herself. If Jenny Kremler, pondering at times over her sorrow, had ever felt that the day might come when she would not be able to recall with any distinctness the features and gestures and endearing ways of her little son, she had almost reason to wish, during those two hours, that memory might not be so continually sharp as it was to-day.

So continually was that shadowy small figure by her side, so clearly in memory came the other mornings in years gone by, when he was wont to follow her about as she was busy with her household cares, that she dared not encourage herself in the thought of him. To let her memory have full sway had meant a giving way to grief so poignant that she could not recover her calmness. As the day wore on she became braver; for Joe's sake, and Emma's and little Maggie's she would be brave, she told herself; and now that the hour of festival had arrived she was almost cheerful.

When Emma had pulled the chairs up to the table, as it was always her duty to do, Jenny called to little Maggie, "Run and tell pa that dinner is ready." But as they took their places little Maggie came in wonderingly. "Pa says he don't want no dinner,

an' he ain't comin' in; an' I tol' him we doin' to have chicken for dinner, too."

Jenny went to the door; outside on the front platform Joe was sitting. "Come in, Pa, to dinner," she said.

"I ain't comin' in, Jenny," he said, not trusting himself to look.

"Come in an' set down, Joe — you ain't used to goin' 'thout your meals, an' it ain't good fer you," she said gently. He followed her in and sat down.

"Ain't them there asters pretty?" said she, quite cheerily, as she tied Maggie's bib on and sat down in her own place. "The chillern gathered them in the meadow ez they came from Sunday School." Then Joe helped the plates and they were fairly started with their dinner. Jenny looked up to see that he was eating nothing, and sat moodily watching her.

"Ain't you goin' to eat none of the chicken, Joe? It's just like we used to hev it," she said quite gently, at the same time reaching across the table and supplying his plate generously.

"It's awful good, Pa," said Emma. "I know why we dot chicken an' 'zerves," said Maggie, "'cause dis is my bruver Hansie's birfday. I bet if he knowed we wuz doin' to hev chicken, he'd wish he wuz here, wouldn't he, Ma?"

Joe drank his coffee at one gulp and pushed his chair back. "I guess I don't want no dinner, Ma; I'll go outside and smoke my pipe," he said, quite huskily.

Jenny regarded him with quite piteous eyes. Was he never to be able to hear that beloved name? Must he always be so lonely in his sorrow when it was hers to share? "O Joe, I wish you'd set with us tell we're done," she said, pleadingly. He looked at her gravely, and seeing the moisture in her eyes, said, with gentle patience, "I'll set here if it pleases you, Ma."

"I don't want you to go tell I show you the s'prise I've got for you; hit's to come last of all, but if you ain't goin' to eat no more dinner, we'll hev hit now. The chillern's most done eatin' anyhow."

She pushed back her chair in a little excited way that reminded Joe of her girlhood days, and went hastily into the pantry.

In a moment she returned bearing in her hands, held high in front of her, the cake. Above it the burning candle twinkled in

the breeze that moved the muslin curtains back and forth. The children and Joe stared speechlessly while Jenny walked slowly but triumphantly to the end of the table and set it down. Through the open window the voice of a dove broke the silence, while Jenny waited a moment; then she said lovingly, "Ain't hit jus' lovely?"

Still Joe looked at it dully. He was not well to-day, he thought, and somehow, as he pushed his hand across his eyes and looked at the shining whiteness, he could think of nothing but a snow-covered, frozen little mound glistening in the February sunshine.

"What is it, Jenny?" he asked, sharply, a sudden pallor showing through all the sunburn.

"Why, don't you all know what it is? It's a birthday cake!"

"My, ain't it pretty?" whispered Emma.

Joe was very white. His voice came thick and slow as he said, turning a stern face to his wife: "You an' I ain't got no call to be hevin' birthday cakes on such a day ez this, Jenny. Things is changed fer us now frum what they used to be. We ain't got no call to be rejoicin'. What we had we ain't got now — an' we ain't no reason to act ez though we hed."

Did Joe so misunderstand her? The tears were dropping from her eyes so that she could hardly see to cut the cake.

"It ain't that we're rejoicin', Joe; I know that we ain't got no call to rejoice. Hit's because hit would please him; hit's in respect to little Hans." The last words came in almost a whisper.

The little girls sat silent, with wide-open, wondering eyes. It was a painful moment. Could Joe so misunderstand her, and she be so unequal to explain? She bent her head to hide the tears as she pushed the knife into the cake and cut several slices; then she lifted a piece on it and extended it towards Joe. His face was white, and he shook his head in a sort of despair.

As Jenny stood looking piteously through her tears and wondering dimly how she could make him understand, through the silence, with the note of the complaining dove from the orchard, came into her memory the trembling voice of the old minister, as he was wont to stand on Sunday morning behind the communion table, stirring her beyond herself, and her manner became as one might expect of some high priestess ministering the rites of her

shrine, as she again extended the portion of cake to Joe, and said with a gentle insistence, "Take; eat; do this in remembrance of him!" Her face wore a rapt expression as she waited a moment: then, continuing with gentle authority, she said: "It's his birthday cake — that s why we hev it, to remember him by, just like he wuz settin' here eatin' it with us. We ain't talked about him none, Joe, because hit's been that hard, but we're goin' to more now, because hit makes hit seem more ez if he wusn't gone, an' hit makes us remember that, if he is gone, we had him for eight years, an' that's something to remember."

Great tears were rolling down Joe's face as he reached forth and took the piece of cake. He put a part of it into his mouth, swallowing it with an effort; the remainder he pushed tenderly into his pocket, keeping his hand about it. Then he arose and flung himself through the door.

Jenny tenderly handed the little girls each a piece of the cake, then she followed Joe out into the yard. Down through the grape arbor they walked and into the orchard.

When they came back the early twilight was falling; the little girls came out to meet them and walked, one on either side of them, back to the house.

After the children had gone to bed and the evening's work was done, Joe turned to his wife, who was sitting by his side on the bench on the little platform, and said, looking across the valley at the mist fast enfolding the hills, "It's purty here, ain't it, Ma?"

"Yes, Joe," she said.

"I wuz thinking this morning that I'd sell out and go West. I told Jim Graeme that I'd sign to-morrow, after I'd spoken to you about it, but I'm goin' ter tell him in the morning that I won't. We couldn't go, Jenny." His arm slipped around her tenderly as she cried, "We couldn't go so far from the churchyard, Joe."

After a while he said: "That 'ar lighted can'le on the cake looked jus' like a star shinin' in the dark."

"That's what it reminded me of, Joe," said Jenny, softly.

The Vase of the Mikado.*

BY A. ERNEST B. LANE.

RYTE JUSTICAN was a collector — a professional collector. He reaped his harvest from remote fields, sown with the flotsam and jetsam of bygone ages.

Often he was sent on very particular missions by enthusiastic amateurs or richly endowed scientific societies, to oozy islands below the equator, sweating disease, to the great poppy fields of China, to the Fiji Islands. Orchids, primitive opium pipes, aboriginal weapons and cannibalistic curios — these were his quest, and there was no dangerous or remote region into which he had not penetrated, no peril which he had not braved — and escaped.

But as yet he had not made the big "find" which is the dream of all collectors. To be the discoverer of something absolutely unique and inimitable means for the collector fame, fortune and a gratification like that of the artist when he brings his work to perfection. Many times he had taken his life in his hands searching for this elusive dream, which is the more fascinating because

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it is formless. He knew the grotesquerie of which Nature is capable, the fantasies which Oriental art makes real, and so his search had all the charm of the inconceivable.

Thus far, however, he had but shared the common lot of collectors, though he certainly deserved better things. Never had he so deeply regretted his non-success as one day when, lounging upon the veranda of a Ceylon coffee planter's house, he reviewed the last months of his life. For it had come about that Kryte Justican had been himself "collected," and by a pair of the sweetest eyes in the world, and was now a labelled specimen in the anthropological collection of a girl in Calcutta. He would have given much to read the label, and everything to know that he was the "unique specimen" for which Miss Linden's wistful eyes had been looking. However, there was a monetary "but" in the matter, so Kryte Justican, who had very fastidious (and perhaps exaggerated) ideas of honor, came away from Calcutta and said nothing. He had thought Miss Linden's expression odd when he said good-bye — had she been any other woman he would have thought it tender — but in her case he dared not. Very soon, too soon, after meeting her, he had said something gallant, and perhaps Miss Linden thought it presumptuous upon such short acquaintance, for she had said, laughing:

"Ah, Mr. Justican, you must not make me such speeches! There is 'Standing room only' in my affections. You are not the man, I think, to stand and pray!"

"No," he said, coolly enough; "I have a sense of the fitness of things — at some shrines I should prefer to kneel."

"Some?" she said — but a faint color belied her impertinence.

"One," he answered directly. His eyes were masterful, but Miss Linden was not easily conquered. She smiled a little, half turned, paused, gave him a look half shy, half mutinous, and wholly adorable, which completely finished him, and then resolutely joined herself persistently to Mrs. Watson.

As Justican thought of this for the hundredth time, he asked himself if she had meant to rebuke his presumption, warn him that she was no longer free (half the eligibles of Calcutta were captives of her chariot), or — happier thought — had he really penetrated her defences and touched her heart, if ever so little?

Musing in this manner, he was rallied by his neglected friend, the planter, who recounted some of his own affairs of the heart.

"I meant the real thing, you brute," said Kryte, laughing half vexedly, the color stealing up under his brown skin.

"Well, you have a plucky lot of cheek!" said the planter. "Have another ricky?"

"No, thanks."

"Come and see my latest importation of famine, then," said the coffee man rising, and the two went to the coolie quarters, where a new batch of emaciated, half-dead Japanese coolies were in the first stage of "building up" on rice water. The wily old Jap padrone who had accompanied them upon their "personally conducted" trip to Ceylon had sailed away as soon as he got them hustled on shore, and his count verified and acknowledged — not waiting for possible complaints as to the condition of the consignment.

"Fine looking lot of cattle!" said the planter. "I can count three weeks' rations dead loss."

"Yes," said Justican; "I'm looking at that old chap over there, who's a regular beauty. He's exactly like a very fine one-piece old ivory carving I've just sent to Christy's. Look at his ribs! And his face like a corrugated mask, and the wrinkles about his ears! Why, man, he might have been the model for the statuette — that's what the habit of centuries does."

Justican seemed quite unaware of the inversion of his comparison. The planter grinned silently, and, when his guest went to talk to the old coolie, shrugged his shoulders and returned to his piazza and his gin rickies.

When the starved Oriental heard himself addressed in his own language and in a scholarly dialect, he prostrated himself and proceeded to make various exaggerated avowals of respect and humbleness to the collector, which after some days were justified by the facts, for the aged Japanese almost succumbed to the after effects of the starvation diet on board the ship, the master of which had contracted to supply so many coolies for the coffee plantation, and who, if he lost on his venture, had at least nothing to reproach himself with as to extravagance in the commissariat.

Undoubtedly, the old coolie might have relinquished all hope of

ever seeing the land of cherry blossoms again, had it not been that Justican devoted himself to thorough nursing.

Thus it came about that when the collector, receiving the mail for which he had been waiting, prepared to start afresh on his mission, the ancient Japanese sent for him and entrusted to him a secret that fairly dazzled Justican — and the imagination of the professional collector is not easily overcome.

Long, long ago, ages before the Christ from whose birth we date our centuries, the Japanese were already skilled in all arts of fabrication. The common things of everyday life were to them things of art. Life itself was less complex, but its components were more beautiful. Gold and lacquer work, ivory, jade and crystal were by these old Japanese wrought to the acme of perfection, but above and beyond all, their achievements with porcelain were supreme. In the course of time much of their wondrous skill was lost, as the exigencies of foreign and civil war distracted their descendants from the arts of peace, but these ancients wrought with porcelain as though it had the properties of a dozen different materials — spun it as though it were silk, carved it like soapstone, imbued it with colors as though it were an absorbent bud from the cotton tree — colors so rich, so pure, so utterly unattainable to us that a tiny vase of peach-blow sells for ten times more thousands than it is inches high — nor was the peach-blow their most precious ware. They did not think lightly of their own achievements, those ancient artificers — and records of notable objects of art were kept in the imperial archives, and from this regal treasury of secrets hints and inklings have filtered forth of marvels made and seemingly lost, long, long since. Then there is scarcely a district in Japan that has not its local tradition, preserved orally, of some hidden or vanished treasure. These Japanese traditions never concern themselves with gold in the concrete — it is always some great bronze or jade image or wonderful crystal ball that excites the avid imagination.

Of all these wonderful tales, the most wonderful and most widely known is the story of the Vases of the Mikado. The tale of two great vases of the inimitable porcelain of their era, perfect and without flaw, made entirely of that peacock iris porcelain (of which we moderns have never seen aught but some tiny broken

fragments), and sunk in a certain spot in the sea, to become crusted with the pearly deposits, the coral growths, the saline traceries of the deep. If the Japanese worship their ancestors, they certainly do not neglect posterity, for when the vessels were sunk it was intended that they should remain a hundred years — a glorified version of the custom of laying down a pipe of wine at an heir's birth, to be broached at his majority.

But the Mikado who thus laid up treasure for posterity was soon cut off, and his successors were involved in many wars. In process of time, by the mutations of ministries and the evolution of dynasties, the exact location of the Vases of the Mikado was lost, but the tradition of their existence, while growing more attenuated as time passed, remained, and Justican, whose mind was stored with these things, had heard the story. He had seen fragments of common pottery, taken from Japanese waters, which had, indeed, experienced "a sea change into something rich and strange," and the secret which the old coolie had imparted to him was the definite knowledge that one of the Vases of the Mikado was yet in existence, and when he had told this much, he drew from his loin-cloth a little packet wrapped in rice paper, then in the water-proof cloth made from the lake reeds, which, unfolding, displayed an old scrap of parchment, from which depended a silken cord, curiously knotted, and upon which was inscribed the outline map of a portion of the sea coast of Japan. It was the map of a wide, curving bay. To the left was a red symbol, which Justican recognized as the cypher of that long dead Mikado who had been so beneficent to the arts and crafts. A tiny dot marked what the coolie said was the exact location of the Vase. The secret had been in his family for ages, a hereditary treasure, but, ironically enough, valueless to them. For they were of the poorest and never could have possessed themselves of it secretly, and to avow the knowledge of the secret would have been to sell it to the territorial lord at the price of unimaginable tortures.

But in each generation of his family one was bred a diver, that he might descend to see that the treasure of the family was safe. He himself with his own eyes had seen it — standing at the height of a man and of wondrous beauty — but, at the bottom of the sea! The other? It lay in fragments embedded in the sand. The

knots on the silken cord counted the number of paces it was from the point marked by the imperial cypher to the location of the Vase marked by the dot.

When all this had been told, Justican asked the old coolie what reward he wished. He declared that "a smile from His Most High Benevolence" was enough for him, for why should he ask for money, or what gladness was there in it, when he might not go home? Or why should he beg that he be set free of his contract with the coffee sahib and be sent home, if he had not wherewith to buy food when he got there? The plain Occidental meaning of this Oriental inversion was that he wanted liberty to go back to Japan and money enough to keep him when he got there. This Justican promised specifically, whereupon the old coolie said:

"I perceive that I have been talking to one who has the true wisdom."

When they separated, a lean form rose from behind a pile of shallow coffee creels, near where they had had their talk, and, betaking himself to one who was a professional scribe among the coolies, the listener got from him the materials for writing, and after laboriously inscribing certain lines, came prostrating himself before Justican as to a god, and besought him, saying that he had heard from the old coolie that the Most High was going to the very province whence the most humble and miserable worm now before him had come, and would the Noble One condescend to take the letter (which of a truth the crawling one dare not hand to His Dragonship), forgetting the slave who had written it, but deigning to glance at the name of the August One to whom it was sent, and so on, and so on, until out of the magniloquence Justican gathered that he wished a petition sped on its way to the great man of the neighborhood where he was going, and feeling himself debtor to the whole creation of coolies he cheerfully consented.

So the collector of floating and sunken treasures departed, and it came to pass that in the coolie quarters of a certain coffee plantation in Ceylon two coolies, a young one and an old one, boasted that they would soon be going back to Japan with their fortunes made. Now the younger one grew offensive at last, putting the

tongue in the cheek at the old one and declaring that *he* would be recalled to a position of power at the side of the ruler of the province, and when the wrinkled patriarch heard that he grew suspicious and wily, and presently wormed out of the vainglorious young man that he had sent a letter by Justican. That was enough for the old coolie. He thereupon sought his master, and made a talk to him, explaining the certain defeat of Justican's plans if the young coolie's letter should be delivered, and beseeching him to let Justican know as swiftly as the devil that talks under the sea could convey it.

But the coffee planter was a deliberate man in all save matters of the heart. A cable message is to a letter what Liebig's is to beef, and the planter's brain balked at the effort of producing such a concentration of intelligence. Besides, he was not a collector, and mentally he confused the Vase of the Mikado with the china ornaments on his mantelshelf. So he pacified his anxious serf with many promises — and wrote Justican two mails later.

Justican sailed for Japan with the love of Miss Linden in his heart and the fear of typhoons before his eyes, for it had come about that with each wave that slapped against the ship he found himself calculating the effect of winds and waves upon the precious object which he already mentally called his. Musing always upon the lady and the Vase, their identities became interchangeable, and he strove, as it were, single-mindedly for each. For, given the right to woo, the suit seems half won, and Justican knew that if he got the Vase he would have the right to speak to Miss Linden.

In due season he arrived in Japan, and immediately he took a coaster for the nearest considerable seaport to his destination. Now, one of the most essential qualifications of a successful collector is that he be clever at "covering his tracks," for though "Finding's keeping and keeping's having" in the collector's code of ethics, governments and territorial lords are prone to perverted notions of such matters.

Justican was an adept at "covering his tracks." Indeed, paradoxical as it may seem, he sometimes covered them before they were made, as in this instance, when, tarrying in the little seaport to fit out the little ship he had chartered, he gave out that he was

searching for old embroideries, in the fourfold stitch, so famous, and ancient swords.

Now, the chief steward of the over-lord of the province was in the seaport when Justican arrived, come at the bidding of his master to conduct certain singing ladies to the territorial palace, and he conveyed the intelligence of Justican's arrival and his quest, together with the letter from the young coolie in Ceylon, which Justican delivered over to him sealed with a mild glow of benevolent well-doing.

It was not long before the collector had his little ship, *The Rice Bird*, ready. Among his men were two expert divers, engaged, however, in a general capacity, with no apparent regard to their peculiar avocation. When Justican told them to dive they would dive. Till then they took their places with the rest of the crew in whatever was the occupation of the moment.

Justican knew a little of most practical things, and he had block and tackle all ready to be rigged when necessary to raise the Vase. So behold! One fine morning *The Rice Bird* cast anchor in that great bay where the Vase of the Mikado was waiting for the "heir of the ages" who was to possess it.

It was necessary to wait for the full moon, for Justican had no idea of beginning his work in daylight, and no Japanese diver will descend unless the moon be full. The collector had carefully scaled his map of the bay and knew the precise spot to begin.

Meanwhile, he concluded to rake the district for "finds" in the way of antiquities. The district was altogether out of the tourist rut, and Justican got some very good things, notably a three-headed dragon with a flexible scaled body, made after the manner of a suit of armor. These treasures he had transferred immediately to *The Rice Bird*, which was held ready to depart at any hour. The Vase of the Mikado would not be on board ten minutes when the ship would spread her lateen wings and be away. He had known many collectors who had loitered until their purchase becoming known to the over-lord, he had stepped in, confiscated the treasure from the buyer and the price from the seller, and left them both lamenting.

Day by day the people came to the collector's hut on shore to display their wares. Day by day Justican chaffered and chafed,

and night by night he watched the slowly rounding moon and thanked his stars that the old coolie's map was so particularized, for this bay, with its sandy reaches, its monotonous background of sombre-shafted pines, its imperceptible gradations from inlet to sea line, would have taken more than one night's searching — more than a week's or a month's — ere he could have located the Vase. As it was, he had *The Rice Bird* anchored over the spot on the bay corresponding to the Imperial cypher on the map. He had but to sail so far, put his man over the side, pull up the Vase, get away — and then — the girl with gray eyes at Calcutta.

The moon was near the full when, one morning, a messenger came to him. There was, it seemed, a certain nobleman in the neighborhood who had fallen upon evil days, yet he would not have it known abroad. He had a great store of armor, embroidery, paintings on silk paper, and old ivories. Some of these he might sell, did the foreign nobleman care to come to see them. Part with them he might, but hawk them to Justican's hut he could not. Still, if the foreign nobleman cared to see them, he would be conducted safely by the trusty messenger, who, having spoken, stood in his scant, snow-white linen, his head humbly bowed, his straw sandals together at "attention," for he had spoken with Justican outside the hut, and so had not removed his foot covering.

In three minutes Justican was following his guide between the brown trunks of the pine trees, upon the bark of which the process of growth had left marks like a carven geometrical design. They went on and on, by a winding and ever narrowing way, across a little lagoon where irises grew and where herons and scarlet ibis seemed to regard them as trespassers, and then they came to a typical Japanese garden, with artificial lakelets, miniature mountains, tiny pagodas, in the arches of which hung cunningly tuned chimes of bells; fountains poured from the mouths of dragons, with rainbow fish swimming in their basins; trees, twisted and stunted into mere living knots, and, in the midst of this, an eight-sided pagoda of porcelain, into which Justican was ushered, finding there an elderly Japanese in gorgeous array, waiting to receive him.

The room was octagonal, following the configuration of the pagoda. There were evidently more stories above, and this one was

not lighted from the sides but from above, a flood of light coming down through pellucid glass. About this octagonal room were hung the most exquisite embroideries. Here and there were stands of ancient armor, and grotesque war masks grinned from the wall. Ivory tusks, carved to represent the pilgrimage of life with all its incidents, stood on pedestals of jade, and a glorious globe of flawless crystal caught the descending light and flashed it forth again to each corner of the room. Justican paid scant heed, it must be said, to the courtesies and formal greetings of the elderly Japanese — his educated eye was appraising the treasures about him. Above all, a very ancient *nooriman* took his eye. This Japanese palanquin was of lacquer without, while within it was lined with hand-woven brocade of pale mauve wistaria blossoms and red-billed swallows. It had great bearing poles adorned with rings of silver, and the torch socket and corners were bound with the same metal, not riveted but hammered into place.

Justican bargained for it, and got it for a price that made him mentally give thanks. The elderly Japanese seemed pleased with his choice, too, but suddenly, giving signs of annoyance and exclaiming against the negligence of his people in not bringing refreshments, he left the pagoda, closing the door.

The antiquarian was delighted with the opportunity of examining the hangings, but, after minutely scrutinizing one, he found himself rather oppressed. It occurred to him that his host was a long time away, and that the room was close. He looked for the door, but an embroidered hanging concealed it, and he could not remember which of the eight walls held the panel. He had a strange desire to breathe fresh air, and started toward where he thought the door must be. Midway he swayed and would have fallen, had he not caught at the *nooriman*. His eyes were smarting and there was an acrid taste in his mouth; he felt a strange numbness stealing over him.

He asked himself the reason for this, and all at once he *knew*. He had been betrayed; he was being suffocated by one of those vaporous poisons of which the Japanese and the Burmese alone know the secret. He was in an air-tight chamber. If they left him long enough he would die like a mouse under an exhaust tube — he remembered once seeing such an experiment.

But why was this? Then his dulling and wavering thoughts centred upon the map. That was it! Yet, how had they known? He heard the murmur of many voices — there was in his head the sound as of a hundred grinding millstones which, as they turned, seemed to strike off sparks that darted before his eyes and dazzled them.

This was the end, then — and a whimsical thought shaped itself: "Exit, amid fireworks!" In that flash of intelligence which, for the fraction of a second, intervenes between delusion and lethargy, he saw the door open and a dozen brown faces peer in. He thought, defiantly, "They shall *not* have the Vase of the Mikado!" Then he fell, his last thrill of consciousness being a strange and incoherent sense of triumph, which abode with him till he awoke.

He awoke with a sea breeze blowing away the fumes of poison, awoke smothered by pale mauve wistaria blossoms, through whose racemes flitted red-billed swallows. After a dizzy moment or two he realized that he was in the ancient *nooriman*, that his brown-faced body-servant peered between the curtains, that the salt-water smell of the wide sea was in his nostrils.

He stretched out his hand — his arm was stiff and the joints worked grudgingly — and the servant helped to drag him out of the *nooriman*, though at one time he seemed like to burst it open and ruin it with his broad shoulders. He staggered as he tried to stand upright, and would have fallen but for the servant, but as his smarting eyes looked again upon the world, a very Berserker rage possessed him, for *The Rice Bird* was out at sea, the sun was sinking, and the bay in which they had been anchored was far, far behind!

Then it was that the ship captain, trembling before the rage and the curses that Justican poured forth, came and explained, saying that His Honor had been borne aboard by the servants of the Lord of the Province in the *nooriman*. That the servants had given also their Lord's orders that *The Rice Bird* take wing at once, nor ever show herself in these waters again. That the Lord of the Province knew nothing of the Foreign Lord, save that in having a cup of saki with him he had fallen into a strange stupor, and out of the goodness of his heart the Lord of the Province had sent

his bearers with him to the ship. "Whereupon," said the captain, "the bearers departed, and we also, having no voice to guide us save the voice of the great Lord, came away, for, let His Honor mark, we knew not whether he were alive or dead and gone to his thrice illustrious ancestors, but — this very virtuously — we said one to another, 'We will not so much as profane the person of the Most High Lord by the touch of our unworthy fingers, nay, if he be dead and stink and breed a pestilence among us, yet will we hold our hands that they may see we have not done harm to the Most Illustrious —'"

But Justican, raving, drove them from him, and wrestled with the devil of his disappointment alone in his ransacked cabin. For there was no hope now, the map was gone — it were useless to attempt to get this crew to turn back. Besides, long ere this, doubtless, the Vase of the Mikado was safe in the possession of the Lord of the Province. But how — how had he guessed the stranger's object, when for years the map had been hidden unsuspected in the poorest house in his province? The answer to this puzzle Justican discovered when he got back to port and found the coffee planter's letter at the consulate.

Justican was hard hit. There were crow's feet about his blue eyes and a bitter set of the lip under his tow moustache as he packed up his swords and embroideries, the three-headed dragon and the ancient *nooriman*, and sent them off to Christy's. The thought which, of all others, most tormented him was that he himself had borne the young coolie's missive of betrayal, and put it into the mail pouch of the Lord of the Province.

. . . . . .

It was three years later. Kryte Justican was *en route* to Scotland to classify a collection of pottery bequeathed to a museum. Pottery made him muse on the one great opportunity of his life which Fate had caused him to miss. When he left Japan after that *fiasco*, he took with him two definite resolves — one to reward the old coolie according to his intentions, not according to their outcome — the other to go once more to Calcutta, spend a few days in worship, and then say good-bye to Miss Linden, a programme which he proceeded to carry out, save in one not unimportant particular.

He went to Ceylon, saw the old coolie safe on board a ship bound for Japan with a sum which seemed to him riches, and saw on the face of the young coolie as he, too, watched the receding ship, a sickening look of "hope deferred" which checked the natural desire to do him bodily harm. It in no degree raised his estimation of the Japanese Lord, who evidently had no intention of rewarding the poor wretch who had written to put a priceless treasure within his reach.

There remained the farewell to Miss Linden. Justican went to Calcutta and spent a number of blissful days, his heart in his eyes as he watched the object of his adoration. A certain timorousness had replaced her gay defiance. But he, like many worse men, had "principles," and he was determined to live down his own heart and live up to them, and so one day he went to say good-bye to Miss Linden.

He found her on a piazza overrun and shaded by a tropical creeper with roseate, lily-like flowers. They talked and the collector told of his projected voyage to Patagonia, and Miss Linden listened and smiled — though after that a deeper note seemed to sound in her voice — and then he rose to say farewell.

"Good-bye," he said, and his eyes added eloquently those things which he would not say.

"Good-bye," she replied, and laid her hand in his.

They looked at each other. In his face was unspeakable yearning. On hers — could it be? — reproach.

Then, slowly but unmistakably, her eyes filled with tears. It needed but that. In half a second she was in his arms, and they were vowed to each other.

Two years and six months later they were no nearer marriage than before. Justican was here, there and everywhere. She was in Calcutta or Simla, much run after, but loyal.

Justican thought of these things, and almost groaned, as he again remembered that fatal slip twixt the cup and his lip. Next day, as he strolled through the Scottish museum where his expert knowledge was to be employed, he suddenly halted in the Japanese Room, for there, reposing in a conspicuous place, was a silver-mounted, lacquered *nooriman*, with lining and curtains damasked with wistaria blossoms and red-billed swallows. A

card conveyed the information that it had been presented to the museum by the Duke of Strathross.

As Justican stood musing by the *nooriman* in which he had taken that ignominious ride, there revived in him the memories of that ill-starred day. Once more the deadly sickness and physical numbness chained him to the spot; once more a lethargy beclouded his reason; again he heard the murmur of voices; again, by a supreme effort, he resolved to balk his enemies in their search for the map. Mechanically, like an automaton controlled by some external but superior power, he put forth his hand, slid it into the silver-bound torch socket, and —

The antiquarian emerged from his trance, trembling like a leaf in a storm, for there in his fingers was something at which he dared not look for very joy, while subconscious memory, spanning the years and the gulf of oblivion, whispered to him how, by a final struggle of the entrapped intelligence, he had had wit enough to conceal the invaluable map in the torch socket of the *nooriman* — and there it was! The unaccountable sense of triumph which he had felt for a second was explained — intellect had been numbly rejoicing at its success.

Kryte Justican went back to Japan, and, independent of Japanese boats or boatmen, found and brought away the Vase of the Mikado. But all the world of art knows of that, knows of the enormous price paid for it, and of how it stands in the grand *salon* of one of the White Tsar's great palaces, guarded night and day.

The world, however, does not know of Justican's first venture for it, of how he became possessed of the secret, nor of what his success meant to a certain faithful woman in India.

On Pigeon River.*

BY JEANIE DRAKE.

WHEN Lieutenant Richard Carroll reached the mountain district in North Carolina to which he had been sent, it was with hourly temptation to swear over what he felt to be the proverbial wild goose chase. A needle in a haystack — a spring of water in the ocean — might be as easily found as a deserter in these, his native wilds. In the presence of the two men specially detailed with him for this service it was his not to reason why, his but to do — his superior's orders, if he could — but, in any case, to maintain a respectful, soldierly silence concerning them. With Corporal Brown, however, a man to be trusted, he could let himself out a little.

"In the name of Heaven, Brown," he cried ruefully, when they were alone together, after rations and quarters for all had been arranged in the old mill, "what are we here to do! To waste time as we have been wasting it for the last week, tramping over a country where no railroad has ever been, into every manner of gap and hole and thicket, up and down, round and about, hither

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and thither, and not a soul among these stupid natives able to guide or even give us a word of direction!"

"Not willing, maybe," said Brown, drily, "but able enough. They're not so stupid as they look. You see, lieutenant, these here mountaineers ain't noways in favor of the war. They ain't got no cotton, and they ain't got no slaves. They don't give a darn for the Confederacy nor States' rights. Nor they don't give a darn for the Union, neither. All they want is to be let alone up here on their mountain tops, to play quoits with horseshoes and hunt and chew tobacco and drink whiskey, and watch their women diggin' and hoein' and spinnin' and weavin' and workin' generally for them. And to conscrip' them and haul 'em down to a flat country to be set up as a target in another man's quarrel, with nary a rock or hill to get behind — that ain't their notion of fightin' and strikes 'em as hard usage."

"All the same," said the lieutenant, looking thoughtfully at the remains of their supper of corn bread and greasy cabbage, "if we find this fellow, he'll be shot. Fill your pipe; the tobacco's pretty fair. The Confederate service is that scarce of men just now, that we can't let even an unwilling mountaineer desert in the face of the enemy, without making an example of him for the good of the rest of the homesick slouching lot. But first catch your hare, of course; and while this particular hare goes doubling and winding through the Blue Ridge and keeping just out of reach, our men are, maybe, having another good fight down by Wilmington — and we not in it — and they laughing at us. Confound Bedloe!"

And he kicked the smouldering logs in the fireplace, and they sent up a shower of sparks, crackling and sputtering, which prevented his hearing the door open without any conventional warning; and when at a word from Brown he turned, a girl stood in the doorway. She was young and slim, but quite tall and looked awkward in such short, limp, calico skirt as she wore. It was blue, home-dyed, and exposed bare, sunburned ankles and feet. Her features were at first hidden by a lank sunbonnet of the same stuff as her dress, but when she presently took it off and twisted it in her hands, both men were struck and puzzled by a likeness to some one, but whom they did not remember.

"Well, my girl, what is it?" asked Carroll.

Gazing at him with perfect directness and after the leisurely bovine manner of the mountaineer, she took her time to answer. He had begun to feel amused, yet restive, under her stare when she said:

"Air you-uns the captings of this yere troop?"

"I command the squad; yes."

"I been a-thinkin'"—after another pause and stare, "thet you all 'ud need vittles. Folks round yere's mostly gone—an' their cattle."

This was a state of things familiar to her hearers since they had made their entrance to this rampart of hills through the Gap below. As at a sound rabbits scuttle into their holes in a warren, so at rumor of the soldiers' approach had each cabin and field been deserted, and the domestic animals likewise hidden somewhere. But for a stray chicken or an occasional wandering "razorback," anything but sparse grazing on chance vegetables would have been impossible.

"Why do they run away? We mean no harm to any of you," said Carroll impatiently.

"They ain't a-knowin' thet," replied the girl, simply. "Thar's a few ole men an' boys lef to conscrip'. Anyways I stayed on; for you-uns kaint hurt me much—sence you took away my twin."

"Your twin? What's your name?"

"Marthy Ann Bedloe."

The men's eyes met. Bedloe was the deserter they were after—a boy of eighteen. The likeness was clearly recognized now.

"Them's my bread an' cabbage," said she, waving her bonnet at the table. "Your men came over to my place an' up an' took 'em. I'd best sell you what I can, I reckon. I got sorghum an' eggs, ef you-uns 'll buy 'em."

"I'll see to that," said Carroll, "and pay you for the supper."

He put a Confederate bill into her hand which she took without thanking him and her eyes still intent upon his frank face and well set-up uniformed figure. He noticed that the hand was slim, though brown and work-roughened, and that she had abundant auburn hair and soft, dark eyes with long lashes, and he said as much to Brown, after she took herself very slowly away.

"Yes," said Brown, indifferently, "but she'll be like all these mountain women, the dickens of a hag at thirty. Bedloe's well enough in looks — her twin she says — and I believe her, for he's her image; but as useless, awkward a galoot as ever I saw, and never could be learned to wash his face or carry arms straight. He'd be a good riddance to his company; only, if we have much more riddance, there'll be no company."

"I — don't — much — like the idea of hunting her brother under her eye. We might go further up the river."

"Take my advice, lieutenant," said Corporal Brown, "and make this headquarters. We've got at last into his own country and among his kin. He's most apt to be lurking round here somewhere."

So they settled into quarters at the old mill, from which the miller and his family had fled up the mountain; and for some days now grew familiar with the great rugged eminences towering calmly and silently above, and the lovely banks and green hill-slopes and valleys of the Pigeon. Carroll, with a soldier's quick resource, made himself comfortable in the miller's one living room, which Brown shared with him; the two privates sleeping in the mill-shed, dusty and piled with bags of corn. But by day he had the premises pretty much to himself, for each morning Corporal Brown went forth with the men, rarely returning until nightfall and leaving unexplored no log cabin nor tobacco house nor stable nor cattle shed through these mountains. In this he did better relying on his own knowledge of the region, in which he had once before travelled, than when an occasional uncouth ox-driver or lank mule-rider in butternuts was found to guide; for then, from impenetrable surface stupidity and hidden suspected craft came furious exasperation, and such evenings saw Corporal Brown return to the mill in a frame of temper which his men learned to respect and shun.

During these absences, Lieutenant Richard Carroll, anxious as he was to be rid of this job and again with the army, fared passably well. By temperament a lover of the grandly beautiful in nature, his surroundings would impress and thrill anew each day one from the low country pine-flats. So cordial he found this crisp, cool air that he would stop in his tracks to throw back his

head and square his shoulders and breathe it in with conscious exhilaration. Then Marthy Ann Bedloe would watch him with a responsive smile which only reached and softened her eyes.

"You look pretty peart," she broke out on one of these occasions, "an' I been a-worryin' because I ain't hed no milk to give you. Hed to sell the cow when Hank was took off."

"Was he all you had?" asked Carroll, looking across the road, down a hollow, to where her little clearing with its forlorn log hut showed scant and miserable against the grand background of crag and sky.

"Yes, we-uns is orphins, an' twins. He could plough an' plant better'n me. We hed a older brother — died o' measles down in the army. Name was Aurora Boralis. Our mammy named him; purty, ain't it? Her own name was Mourning Walker Bedloe."

"Name of her family, Walker?" idly watching how the long lashes actually cast a shadow.

"No-o-o. She jes' took thet ar name when she hed conviction o' sin. Like's if this here yearth was jes' a vale o' sorrow. But she tole me she done danced at her own infair; an' she ust to set a mighty heap o' store on dippin'. I ain't never danced in my life. An' I ain't hed no snuff to dip — sence Hank went."

"It would be a pity," said Carroll, "to spoil those white teeth with tobacco." And was recalled to himself by seeing a crimson rise and spread under the tan of round cheek and neck. "It seems to me," he remarked, abruptly changing the theme, "that there ought to be trout in that river," transferring his gaze to the pellucid, dancing water, rippling and eddying on its way over shining rock and clear, transparent depth.

"Thar's oodels o' fish. I ain't no great hand at catchin' 'em; but I kin take you where they's thickest. An' my chickens I been a-fryin' for ye is mos' gone, an' turnips too."

Then her helpful but unconventional comings and goings which had necessitated an occasional bolting of the door on which she never knocked, were varied by fishing excursions led by her. When all were supplied with breakfast, which she cooked as well as brought over, and the corporal's party started, Carroll would get an improvised line and spend most of the day whipping the stream,

wandering up and down its charming banks, above and below the forks, finding, under the girl's direction, clear pools here and there and shady deeps. Sometimes he was full of the angler's exultation at playing and landing at last a lusty, wily, all but unconquerable speckled victim; while at other times he was content, in the glorious September weather, to sit dreamily for long spaces without a tug at the line, his eyes feeding unconsciously on the beauty of shining, rushing, crystal-clear water and fern-clad rocks and green hill and forest, and his thought wandering far. His guide would stay patiently near in either case, with hardly a word for hours, motionless almost as one of the rocks in steady unwavering observation of him. This, at first annoying, came to be little regarded and herself scarcely more than a feature in the landscape, in which her blue cotton gown was a value. Then, with basket full or not, a sharp mountain appetite would at last remind him that he had had but a little lunch, and that it was supper-time. Then she would trudge ahead of him again, over foot-log bridge or, where there was none, wade through some shallow ford, skirt kilted high, her shapely ankles gleaming and splashing through the wetness.

"Ef you ain't used to trampin'," she said with a wistful note, "I guess you gits clean wore out. I wisht now I hadn't burnt the canoe for firewood. But sometimes, I jes' ain't got spunk to cut no more wood — sence Hank went."

"You mustn't cut a stick while we're here," he said commandingly, and she nodded her head in submission. He began to hew diligently at a tree outside on this occasion, while he wondered a little, as the sun dipped down and flashed a last ray or so from behind the peaks, at Brown's unusual lateness. But when the moon presently came up, and yet no sign of the returning party, he was too hungry to wait; but took his supper where Marthy Ann had spread it on the miller's bare pine table. She came in and out, building up the fire, straightening things scattered, clearing the table afterward. Then, when he thought her finally departed to her cabin, came back suddenly in a disconcerting way she had, and found him risen and filling his pipe and gazing meanwhile at an ambrotype he had set up on the mantelpiece.

"Thet thar some one you knows to your place?"

"Yes."

"Looks like you thought right smart of her. She ain't — bad lookin'."

"I am to be married to this lady some day." Then to himself — "when this cruel war is over."

She gazed long upon the pictured sweet and gentle face, but said no more. Only, whereas she had made an unregulated clatter in her previous ministrations, she now moved with curious stillness and closed the door so softly after her that he did not know when she went.

Very sleepy at last, he turned in, still wondering at the corporal's delay; and had had his first nap when the quick, sharp yelp of Marthy Ann's dog across the road waked him. He got up and looked out, expecting to see the party; but no one was in view along the moonlit road, and from the back door of the hut, which had no window, he heard her quiet the cur. Then her figure appeared in the front entrance and he drew back instinctively. She looked long at the mill, then stepped out and, crossing the road, picked up her skirt and waded into the ford. It was so late in the night that the moon, round and full, rode overhead and gave almost perfect light. Why, he hardly knew, but already in shirt and trousers, he only waited to take belt and pistols and was quickly out of the door and on her track. He lingered a moment in the shadow of the great, idle mill wheel, but she did not here look behind her, emerging from the ford on the other side and disappearing into the wood. He waded in at once, the sound of his coming drowned in that of the stream dashing over rocks — and entering the forest close behind her managed to keep her in sight along the narrow trail. At first she would sometimes turn and look, but he instantly stood motionless in shadow; and after a while, feeling secure, she stopped no more, but kept her way steadily and swiftly. Now did his recent tramping stand him in good stead, for the road began shortly to ascend and the climb was a rough one. Twice when his foot struck a stone which rolled, did he await discovery, but she paid no heed now, thinking doubtless that it was some small wandering creature of the night.

On she went, panting a little now, higher and higher, and he was wondering if they would cross the mountain. But, when

nearly at the summit, she turned to her left, making her way through an almost impenetrable thicket. Whatever the object of this expedition, it struck him as a courageous one for a mere girl alone in the night in this desolate place. Suddenly she gave a soft whistle, like a young partridge's call. An answering whistle came from a short distance ahead and she pushed on a few steps farther, where, from an overhanging rock cavern, a form advanced to meet her and said: "Thet you, Marthy Ann? I was afeard you wasn't a-comin'."

Nearly at the same moment, Lieutenant Carroll laid one hand on his shoulder, a pistol in the other hand, and said: "You are my prisoner, Hank Bedloe." The deserter made a movement towards his gun leaning in the cave entrance, but stood still again, feeling the cold muzzle of the pistol. "Marthy Ann!" he cried; and she, stunned for a second by the shock of dismay, would have reached for the weapon, but Carroll, swerving with his prisoner, stood between her and it.

"Marthy Ann," said he, "you must go ahead of us down the mountain and lead the way back. I have two pistols; but there is no need to threaten. You must see there is no help for this thing." She paused, but: "Forward!" said the lieutenant, shortly and sharply, and, with a sort of broken sob, she turned to go back the way they had come. Never would Richard Carroll forget that midnight descent of the mountain-side under the moon. If a suddenly snapped twig, or a stone disturbed, made him start at the thought of ambuscaded rescue lurking in the shadows, his mind was oftener full of pity for this wretched brother and sister — the girl his own willing and kindly handmaid for these past days.

"It was my duty to take him, and I have taken him. The rest is no affair of mine," said soldierly nature within. But as her slender figure moved down the pathway ahead, he could still fancy the dumb, animal, moving appeal of her eyes. So kept the inner voices jangling and tormenting him; but his hand was firm on his pistol and his eye, keen and steadfast, covered deserter and guide alike.

After an interval long or short, he scarcely knew, so full was it with whirling thought, once again he heard, through the universal

nocturnal stillness, the rippling and rushing, the murmuring and dashing, of the Pigeon over its rocky deeps and shallows, and once again they came forth singly from the shadow of the wood, and forded the shining, singing river. On its farther bank Carroll paused a moment.

"Halt!" he said, his voice just higher than the Pigeon's cadences. "Go home now, Marthy Ann, and to bed. I will see that he has some food before he sleeps."

With a look at her brother, and a movement as if she would have touched him, she went in obediently at her narrow door.

Startlingly like her was this slouching twin brother when the lieutenant could see him anew by candle and firelight. Even the little rings that curled on her brow and neck were alike waving about his, escaping from the wretched old hat he never thought of removing. He had the same mute softness of the eyes, and, with more than her slow awkwardness, he looked even younger. He devoured avidly and clumsily the fragments of the supper the officer gave him, and tumbling down on the sheepskin to which he was directed was quickly asleep.

His captor, fully dressed now and wrapped in his cloak, sat near or paced the floor until the night wore away. With day's first beaming over the mountain tops appeared the corporal's party, after long pursuit of a will-o'-the-wisp, it seemed; and Corporal Brown in a state of irritation only to be soothed at news of the quarry ensnared behind his hand.

"That's some satisfaction," he said vindictively, "for all the briers and mud holes we've been tramped through on an all-night fool's errand. If I'd a known the boy that offered to take us 'straight to Bedloe' was some far off kin of his, I'd a mistrusted that he was leadin' us away from here a purpose; and I'd have taught him something before he gave us the slip at last. Well, we've got the fellow, and when do we start, lieutenant?"

"After your men rest a bit. We can take the road this afternoon, and march all night with the moon we'll have. The sooner the better."

The prisoner was now in the mill room where the corporal's men already snored, and Brown guarded him for the hour. Punctual to her time, Marthy Ann brought over the hot pone and

hominy and chicken of the breakfast; and Carroll, coming in after, found her gazing at his ambrotype which he had accidentally left out of his pocket whence he had taken it during the night.

"She's moughty purty," said Marthy Ann and gave it to him. Then she stood at the opposite side of the hearthstone, bonnet in hand, facing him just as he remembered her at first, but pale this morning.

"Ther ain't no sort of a chance for him — no sort of a way?" she asked slowly.

"I'm not his judge," he said gently, "he has to be tried first."

"But you know. It's just shootin' him to pieces, ain't it, when you-uns gits him down thar?"

He would have lied but felt it useless, knowing she must hear sooner or later. She looked out a minute where the great water-wheel's idle bulk crossed a window; then her eyes travelled back to his face: "Hank an' me you see, we'se twins, an' all the fambly thar is. It'll be sort o' lonesome 'ithout him." Then she went away in her lingering fashion.

After noon, all being in marching order, the two privates sentinelled the mill door outside. The officers spoke within in an undertone. "The sister must see him alone for a while, Brown," said the lieutenant, with a side glance, "say a half-hour. We can wait in the inner room, and the men at the door. It is quite safe. There is no window and no other way out."

So the compelling pathetic eyes gave Marthy Ann a last interview with the twin brother with whom she had worked and played through their short life. The time having expired, the lieutenant, with some noise, opened the door between. The boy stood with his head and face against the piled-up grain bags. The girl, hastily and awkwardly taking her hand from his, and putting her apron to her eyes under the drooping sunbonnet, went out without a word, crossing the road at once to her cabin and thence to the woods behind, with evident desire to hide her hurt, like all wild things, in denser solitude.

"Forward! March!" The deserter walked from the mill, absolutely unsoldierly, in lagging, uneven gait. The little squad took the road, the lieutenant feeling some relief that he had been spared the prayers and tears and sobs of more civilized anguish.

Wondering indeed, though with a certain self-reproach, if certain "humans" as they called them up here, differed much from the cattle or fowl who daily, unconcerned, beheld their mates taken from their side to the slaughter.

"What is it?" he called, at some delay, and found that Bedloe wished to remove the rough, cowhide shoes, painful to his unaccustomed feet. He watched while the boy, seated on a stone, took off the coarse foot coverings, and thought: "His feet are as slim and as brown as Marthy Ann's."

Then, as the prisoner rose, Carroll met his eyes and was confused a moment by their expression of extremest terror. The next, Bedloe sprang past the men and was already quite a distance down the road, his bare feet pattering, before the corporal's gun was levelled and he was calling: "Fire! Fire!" Speeding after the fugitive whizzed a pursuing flight of bullets. He was now above the ford at a point where the water was swift and deep, but here he plunged in, and, half wading, half swimming, slipped and scrambled among the sheltering rocks, partly submerged, against which the balls scattered spray.

"If you let him reach the other side," warned the lieutenant, "he'll get away." And one of the soldiers, dropping on his knee and taking careful aim at the figure sliding from one rock to the next, fired. The deserter fell over upon the face of the rock and the rushing water rolled his body to and fro. The men waded in and brought him out, hanging limp between them.

"Dead?" asked Carroll.

"Still breathes, lieutenant."

"Bring him in to Marthy Ann's."

They laid him on a small bed, gay with patchwork, now rapidly crimsoning, and the soldiers went back to pick up their guns. Corporal Brown, seeking to discover the source of a thin stream of blood down the cheek, drew off the hat firmly wedged over the brow, and down came a long coil of waving, auburn hair.

"Oh!" he said, and with the hand of a father of girls instantly fastened it up, covering it again with the hat.

There was absolutely nothing to be done but moisten her lips, death being so near. She opened her eyes and looked into Carroll's face.

"'Taint no use to foller. He's too fur off by now."

"No — no — we will not. My poor child!" and he took her hand in his. She smiled with a look of almost content and made the effort to lay her blood-stained cheek against it.

"She's moughty purty," she whispered, "an' you thinks a heap of her, I allow."

Then she quivered slightly throughout her shattered young body, and the spirit was gone.

"You see, it's this way, lieutenant," said Brown, raising himself up and rather avoiding his superior's eye, "'tain't no manner of use to go ramblin' these mountains after a boy we'll never catch, now that his sister ain't here. The men think we have him and can bury her as such. You can tell the colonel; but the example to the regiment will be the same. If you'll just give orders about the grave, I'll tell the men that we'll bring the — body — ourselves. It's light."

So it came about that one of the privates stuck a bit of wood, on which he had whittled "Hank Bedloe," over the grave of Marthy Ann near the banks of the Pigeon, in which the tender waterwillows dip and flutter and the lusty trout go leaping to-day as in that last wonderful summer of her life.

The Smile of Joss.*

BY WILLIAM J. NEIDIG.

HEN he had washed the dishes, Sam Wren threw off his white apron, drew on his surtout, and went down town. Not to the joss house nor the theatre nor Li Hung Ching's tan game. No! Sam was not such a heathen. Instead, he headed straight for the mission, where there was to be an entertainment that evening.

Sam was walking quietly along, looking neither to the right nor the left, when a bit of red paper fluttered to his feet. The paper contained his name, with the legend "Look out for Ah Fat!" in Chinese. When you find a piece of red paper in the street in Chinatown with your name on it, and the legend "Look out!" in Chinese, it means that you've been doing something that some one doesn't like. It means that somebody has given your name to the devil. Red paper stands for devil. "Ah Fat" stands for—well, Sam Wren knew who Ah Fat was. The warning was evidently from a friend.

One would think that a Chinaman with a good conscience would not be looking back over his shoulder every few rods, to see if he

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were being followed by the Great Black Bogie; that is, a mission Chinaman, who didn't believe in black bogies, and didn't care a tea-leaf whether the devil's eye had a cinder in it from his sandal-wood incense or not. Still, it makes a difference when you know the devil has your name. It's just as well to keep your eyes open when you know a devil is after you. Devils have black teeth, they say. That's so you can't see them when they grin at you in the dark. Never look for a devil's teeth. It's pretty hard to see a devil, unless you get him in the light.

Sam was nearing his journey's end, and nothing had happened. When he should have passed the next dark alleyway he would be all right. That's as close as devils ever get to the mission. It was lighter across the street. Sam thought he would cross the street before he got to the dark alleyway. Besides, walking was easier across the street.

Sam crossed the street. He came opposite the dark alleyway. Almost he was entirely past its menace; when suddenly there was a little cough of fire from the very center of the darkest place of all. Ping! went a bullet, smash against the fence. Another shot, and another. Ping! Ping! The bullets followed him, and he thought he was gone. Now for the mission. Ping! The last bullet stuck in the door-jamb as he burst open the door of his haven. Confucius! but it was a close shave!

Sam Wren knew a thing or two — that he did not learn at the mission — about devils. He knew perfectly well which of the Suey Sing hatchet-boys it was that had shot so wretchedly. Useless knowledge! Ah Fat was a poor shot; that was true. But he could use a knife beautifully. And he was patient; if he did not get his Chinaman this time he would the next. And he was experienced; one corner of the graveyard belonged to him. And he was sly; he had never yet been caught at his mischief. And he was not alone; the Suey Sing Tong was behind him. Ah Fat was the most desperate highbinder in the Suey Sings. Indeed, they had but three. The Suey Sings were a little short on highbinders. Ah Fat and Luy Ling and Luy Kam constituted the entire force. Three men had stepped out from the alleyway. Sam Wren knew who they were.

It doesn't pay to stick your nose in other people's business. It

doesn't pay to stand in with the reform work, and help tear low-browed slave girls from their purchasers. You are liable to get hurt, if you happen to be a Chinaman yourself.

Sam slammed the door of the mission, and ran squealing to the men's quarters. He threw himself upon a bunk and drew the covers over his head. His breath came in gasps. He lay shuddering and cowering, and muttered strange words between his chattering teeth. These reformers carry a thing too far. He had never intended to antagonize the entire Suey Sing Tong. Too late now! He was as good as dead now! All the lady reformers in this world couldn't save him now!

Nine o'clock, ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, midnight. One by one the mission boys had gone to bed. The house was quiet as the dead earth. Every Chinaman was in his bunk, and every Chinaman was asleep — every one, save only Sam Wren. Sam Wren lay like a corpse, with his face to the wall and the blankets drawn over his head. There was not the slightest pulse of blood in his body. It is a terrible thing to have the hatchet-boys after you.

King, the mission housekeeper, before kicking off his embroidered holiday slippers, had stuck three or four pieces of sandalwood punk in a flower-pot, and lighted them. It was not superstition; although, indeed, there is nothing like sandalwood punk for scattering devils. No. It was merely that he liked the fragrance of the burning incense. After a time the room became sweet and pleasant, and lost the disagreeable laundry smell that somehow hangs about a Chinaman's lodgings when you don't burn something to drive it away.

One o'clock, two o'clock. The air was heavy with smoke, and the punk-sticks had at last been consumed by the gnawing glow-worm that will eat straight into the heart of a devil if he comes too close. Sam was still awake, shuddering beneath his blanket. Suddenly he sniffed. It was the incense from the burning sandalwood that penetrated to his nostrils. Sweet and pungent, it carried him back a thousand years, to when he was young, to when he kneeled prostrate before his joss and took the oath of the Sam Yups and had no fear in his heart. Now he was no longer a heathen, and was afraid. Why was he afraid now, and not then? Perhaps it was because of his enemies. Perhaps it was because

Joss stood in with you, if you burned enough paper devils before him, when you had enemies that you wanted to kill. The mission ladies wouldn't let you kill your enemies. It's pretty bad when you can't kill your enemies, and they are after you with pistols and knives and sand-bags. Joss, of course, is a wicked old heathen god, but he lets you kill your enemies.

Two o'clock and fifteen minutes. The Sam Yups kept their joss-house open all night, because you never can tell when you are going to need a joss-house. Sam Wren softly crept out of his bunk and slipped on his shoes. Then, with infinite patience, he unbolted the back door, felt his way down the back stairway, and lost himself in the blackness of the street. He knew that there was a hatchet-boy in the black alleyway, because the Suey Sings never let up on a man once they start in, and so he was very careful, and kept away from the hatchet-boy. At last he arrived at the joss-house, and the sleepy old sentinel passed him through the tortuous, smoky corridors into the presence of Joss himself. He bought of the old man some punk, and some red papers that represented the different orders of devils.

Sam burned his incense in the way prescribed by his tong ancestors. It is very simple. First you light two punk-sticks, one for each hand, and hold them before the face of Joss, your eyes on the ground. Then you bend forward and press your forehead against the sacred mat, holding your punk-sticks so that the feet of Joss shall be shrouded in smoke. Then you chant the sacred lines of your tong, having care to use only the mandarin dialect. When your chant is ended you may withdraw backward, bending low your forehead thrice three times toward the floor. Now, with face averted, you rise. You turn with your back toward Joss. The old priest, with much ceremony, gives over to your keeping the red paper devils which you are to burn, and you light them, one after another, until they are all consumed. No tiniest fragment must escape the flame. If one should get away with his wings singed, or if a fragment of one should not be burned, that devil would take up his residence in your house. Nobody ever lets a devil get away from him.

Sam flaunted his incense before the face of Joss, and bowed his forehead to the sacred mat, and backed away, and turned and

burned his devils without so much as a fragment of any one of them getting away; then he went straight to the corner of the room, where there was a door. He knew now that Joss would smile upon him. The old priest unlocked the door that opened into the Closet of Mystery. Sam selected a slender, keen-edged knife and a stouter stiletto from what was therein displayed, and hid them in his blouse. Then he slipped out into the street and lost himself once more in the night.

But it was no longer Sam Wren the mission proselyte, trembling for his life, no longer Sam Wren the timid Chinese cook; it was Sam Wren of the Sam Yups, with a knife in his hand and the smile of Joss in his heart. Save for the halo of an occasional street-lamp the night was pitch-black. Sam slipped from doorway to doorway, shadow to shadow, street to street, and there was no one to see him. He was part of the night. Now he enters a narrow areaway. He creeps along the ground. He flattens himself against a fence. Cautiously, swiftly, surely, he makes his way through back yards and around obstructions, approaching the mission nearer and nearer.

Half-past-three o'clock. Sam Wren the Sam Yup man presses his body through a hole in a fence and crouches in the blind alleyway that shelters his enemies. He must be very careful now. He knows that one of the Suey Sings still holds guard before the mission. He knows that the hatchet-boys are patient fellows, and never sleep. Perhaps it is Ah Fat who is watching; perhaps it is one of the others. Whichever it is, he is not asleep. The Suey Sings never sleep when they are on a spoor.

Very softly and stealthily the Sam Yup man steals forward. Joss has lent him an invisible cloak, and feet that make no noise. Nearer, nearer, nearer, he draws. He is crawling on his hands and knees in the black angle where the fence meets the ground. The Suey Sing man ought to be very near. There is no telling. It is too black to see.

One foot, two feet more. It is blacker than black ahead. Another advance, slowly, slowly, nearer, nearer, nearer. The blackness takes form. There is something — something — in the alleyway. Very softly the Sam Yup man rises. He bends forward. The black body is an ash-barrel; but against it, with his

face turned in the other direction, leans the Suey Sing hatchet-boy. Sam Wren steals, steals, steals forward, still forward. He moves an inch in a week. Almost he is near enough to strike — almost. He places his hand upon the ash-barrel. He leans over it, forward, forward, forward. He raises his firm right hand, very carefully, very patiently. With a swift stroke he draws it across the shadow, close under the chin. The Suey Sing man falls in a heap, gurgles a little, and lies very still. The Sam Yup man wipes his knife on the Suey Sing man's blouse.

When the Suey Sing man had quit kicking, the Sam Yup man took him by the heels and dragged him behind the ash-barrel. Then he took up his position where the other had stood, and waited. He knew that the others would be along before daylight. He knew that they were expecting Sam Wren the stupid cook to leave the mission at an early hour. The white man who employed him had to have his breakfast. No doubt his stupid cook never dreamed that the Suey Sing boys would wait for him all night.

Sam Wren waited, and waited, and the night grew blacker as it grew older. Four o'clock. It is time the Suey Sings were at their post. Four fifteen. Someone is coming up the street. The Sam Yup man never moves a muscle. The footsteps draw nearer. They are at the head of the alley. The Sam Yup man does not seem to notice them. They pass on up the street. The Sam Yup man can tell a Chinaman's wooden footsteps as far as he can hear them. It was probably a printer on one of the morning papers.

Now there is another sound of footsteps in the street. Another printer has finished his work and is going home. The footsteps approach the head of the alleyway, and then they stop for a moment. They begin again. A muffled black figure enters the fatal court. Not a word is spoken. Not a word of greeting passes between the watcher of the night and his brother Suey Sing who comes to reinforce him at the appointed hour. The black shape draws quite close to the ash-barrel. The next moment the newcomer falls like a log, with a stiletto through his heart. Beautiful work! Ah Fat himself couldn't have done it cleaner.

The Sam Yup man lets Luy Kam lie where he falls, for he has Ah Fat still to reckon with. Ah Fat is not the man to walk up

and let a friend run a stiletto between his ribs, that is sure. Ah Fat is the keenest of the lot. No doubt he will have a good deal to say about the disposition to be made of knives and stilettos in his neighborhood. It is still very dark. Now and then some one passes in the street; now and then in the distance can be heard the rumble of milk wagons and produce carts. There are people who never keep Sunday, it seems.

The terrible leader of the Suey Sing hatchet-boys came sooner than was expected; that is to say, he came without the warning sound of shuffling wooden shoes, and without any signal whistle. For the rest, when his gaunt shape loomed up before Sam Wren, the Sam Yup man was ready for him.

"Huh! I smell blood!" said Ah Fat, in his thick Canton-Chinese.

"He bled like a hog!" replied Sam coldly, in the same dialect, speaking as few words as possible.

Ah Fat betrayed neither emotion nor surprise. He kicked the body with his foot. Then he fished out a match, and leaned over the corpse, lighting the match upon his shoe.

"You got to be damn sure," he said, as he held the flame over the dead face.

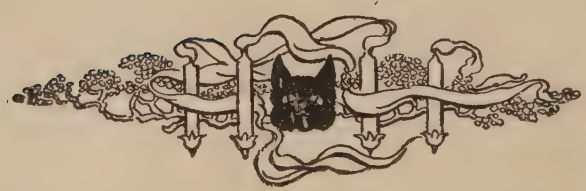
Sam Wren was standing behind him, and when the other bent over the dead man, Sam seized his Suey Sing pigtail firmly in one hand, jerked his head back sharply, and slit his throat from jowl to jowl. The blood spurted forth upon the ground. Ah Fat lurched forward in his rage, fumbling at his pocket. Then he tried to rise, but his knees weakened and would not support him. Sam Wren plunged his knife into his back, where the heart ought to be. Ah Fat tumbled over on his face. His hands twitched a little, his legs kicked a little, the horror at his throat gurgled a little, and then he went to join the ancestors of his tong. And that was the end of the terrible three.

The Sam Yup man felt of each to make sure that he was dead before he left them. The blood flowed once more through his veins. He was contented in his heart. He wanted to dance. He wanted to cry aloud. He felt gloriously exultant. But he did not dance, nor sing, nor cry aloud. It was beginning to grow gray in the east, and it would soon be breakfast time. Sam Wren the Sam Yup man wiped the blood from his hands on the clothing

of the dead Chinamen, and the soles of his shoes also, where he had stepped in the crimson puddle. Then Sam Wren the cook went home and got breakfast.

It is a beautiful thing to feel that you are a member of the great human family. In the morning, after he had finished up his work, Sam went to the Chinese church. In the afternoon Sam went to Sunday-school and taught a class of China boys. In the evening Sam set out for the mission. Although he walked through the heart of Chinatown, no red paper devils fluttered to his feet, and he never once looked back over his shoulder to see if he was followed. He did not cross the street when he came to the black alleyway, but went boldly past. And he did not squeal when he climbed the mission steps. He had his Chinese Bible with him. Perhaps that was the reason. Or perhaps it was the Sunday-school. Or perhaps it was the sermon of the morning.

The Monday papers contained an account of a mysterious high-binder murder, in which three innocent Chinamen had been slain near the Chinese mission, by the hatchet-boys. As usual, there was no clue to the murderers.



The King of the Subdivision.*

BY JAMES O'SHAUGHNESSY.

MERELY the closing down of the George Salsbury Chemical Works would have been sufficient to have caused a sensation in the neighborhood, because everybody thereabout was dependent, directly or indirectly, on its pay roll. The manner in which it was closed was extraordinary in the absence of an explanation, and the following day it was discovered that Mrs. Victoria Salsbury, the wife of George Salsbury, the proprietor of the factory, was missing. Out of these circumstances grew rumors of a startling kind. George Salsbury had been acting rather strangely before the factory was closed, and his conduct then and since had been of a sort that finally led to a terrible suspicion that would be most easily dispelled by the return of his wife.

For years the factory had been regarded as an establishment that was bringing riches every year to its owner. When it was built it stood alone in one of the wide prairie patches of Chicago. Residences quickly sprang up around it, and these were followed by grocery stores, butchers' shops, bakeries and saloons, until the vicinity was like a little town and was known as Salsbury subdivision. George Salsbury was called the "King of the Subdivision." He suggested the title, it was said. At any rate, it pleased him and he tried to act the part.

He was a tall man, with broad shoulders and a military bearing. His hair and beard were black and he kept his beard trimmed with a care that indicated vanity. He dressed with a punctilious regard for the changes of fashion and spent a great deal of money in the maintenance of his stable with its coaches and coach horses.

In strong contrast with the dashing and handsome figure of

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $150 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

George Salsbury was that of his wife. She was small, and her manner was retiring. Her shoulders were stooped and her hands were knotted from hard work. They had begun married life poor and her patient toil and diligent care at saving had contributed much toward starting him as a manufacturer and on the road to fortune. He had adapted himself with easy grace to his improved conditions. She had drudged so long that she could find contentment only in drudgery. When he went driving she remained at home to watch after the polishing of pans and the saving of scraps.

When fortune really came she didn't realize it, and in consequence they drifted out of each other's companionship. His friends were men of affairs and men of fashion. Her friends were the wives of the men who worked in her husband's factory. In time these housewives related gossip concerning her husband, and her contentment, dull as it was, was broken.

One morning a neighboring housewife came to visit her, but no one answered at the door, and the house seemed deserted. The neighbor had come to enquire why the factory had been shut down that morning. Everybody in the subdivision was trying to find out the reason of it. At the hour for beginning work, Salsbury had met the men at the factory door and told them there was no more work there. He gave them no reason for it, and on account of his imperious and autocratic bearing toward his employés, none of them pressed him for an explanation. He took them into the office and paid them the wages due them.

After the men had left the factory, Salsbury remained inside, closing and locking the door after them. When they had got over the first surprise at being thrown out of work without notice and without explanation, they broke up into groups, talking it over. Some of them remarked the unusual manner in which Salsbury acted that morning; that he seemed troubled and dispirited; that his hair was dishevelled and his clothing was not arranged and brushed with usual care. Soon it reached the ears of the men that the Salsbury residence, the rear yard of which extended to the rear door of the factory, was deserted.

All of the subdivision was in a state of subdued excitement that night. The next morning smoke was seen coming from the tall

chimney of the factory. The men quickly gathered about it, thinking work had been resumed, but they found the doors locked and the windows shuttered. For three days they watched and waited for some sign that work would begin again in the factory. Twice at night Salsbury was seen going, by the back way, from the factory to the house and returning to the factory again, and that was the only sign of life about the premises.

These mysterious circumstances, taken with the continued absence of Mrs. Salsbury, were brought to the notice of the police. The next day a policeman went to the factory, but could not gain admission. Salsbury was in the factory at the time and undoubtedly knew the policeman had called, for within an hour he came out and went directly to the police station and gave notice that his wife was missing. He was taken into the captain's private office and interrogated. He said he did not know what had become of his wife, but he believed she had run away while her mind was temporarily deranged.

"Why didn't you notify us sooner?" asked the captain.

"Because I believed she would be back before this."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Oh, nothing. She will come back."

After telling the captain to let the matter rest, as there was no occasion for any police interference, he stalked out of the station. For two days then the police had been active in the matter. The day following they made forcible entry of the house and factory, and the next day Salsbury was arrested, charged with the murder of his wife.

The evidence they produced indicated a crime of the most revolting character. In a big vat in the basement of the factory they found some small pieces of bones and the wedding ring of Mrs. Victoria Salsbury — a gold band ring with the initial letters "V. S." engraved on the inner side. With this ring was found a narrow guard ring. The bones were identified as the phalanges of a human finger. An analysis of the liquid in the vat in which the rings and bones were found showed it to be a solution of potash. It was deduced from this and the corroborative evidence obtained that Salsbury had put the body of his wife into a vat of boiling potash and reduced it until nothing recogniz-

able remained but tiny fragments of bones and the tell-tale rings.

While the world was shuddering at the horror of the crime with which he was charged, Salsbury remained calm and seemingly unconcerned. He took the trouble, however, to employ legal counsel and set up in defence that his wife was not dead and that the rings were not his wife's rings. In further disproof of the State's theory of the murder he contended that a human body could not be disintegrated by potash in the manner indicated. To sustain this contention a cadaver of a woman, of the size and age of his wife, was taken to the factory and boiled in the same vat, under the conditions alleged by the State.

This weird proceeding was witnessed by anatomists, chemists, surgeons, microscopists and osteologists. Their testimony was that such a process could not destroy a human body. This demonstration served the prosecution as well as the defence, for it gave an explanation of why the factory chimney was smoking the morning after the employés had all been dismissed. The State's attorneys concluded that Salsbury had fired the furnaces to incinerate what the potash would not dissolve.

More than one hundred witnesses were called to testify against Salsbury. One of them was an old man who had been for years the night watchman in the factory. On the night of Mrs. Salsbury's disappearance he had been sent away from the factory on errands twice. Salsbury had sent him to a drug store each time for medicine, once at ten o'clock and once at eleven o'clock. The bottles he had got were introduced as evidence. Neither had ever been opened.

Another witness testified that at eleven o'clock that night he had seen Mr. and Mrs. Salsbury going from the house to the factory by the rear way. Another testified that while passing the building at eleven o'clock that night he had heard a strange, wild cry in it. In the remainder of the old watchman's testimony he said that Salsbury stayed in the factory all night, spending much of the time in the basement, where the vat was situated. More significant still, he said Salsbury had kept him out of the basement, although that was in his usual rounds. When he was leaving in the morning, he said, his employer was sitting in the office, still dressed and looking worn and troubled.

The evidence on which the prosecution was based, however, was that furnished by the rings. A housewife from the subdivision testified that she had often seen Mrs. Salsbury wearing the rings. She added artlessly and without apparent appreciation of the crushing conviction of it, that they might not be Mrs. Salsbury's rings, because Mrs. Salsbury had not been able to get her rings off for years.

In establishing a motive for the murder, witnesses were produced who testified that Salsbury had intimated that he wanted his wife out of the way, so that he might marry a woman who was better fitted to his station in life. What was regarded as the most clever piece of police diplomacy in the case was the bringing forward of a woman with whom Salsbury was reputed to be in love, as a witness against him. This woman testified, while verging on a state of hysteria, that Salsbury had told her he wanted his wife out of the way, and that he would get her out of his way; that she was a clod in his path and he was tired of her.

The first of the witnesses for the defence testified in support of the contention of the accused that his wife was still living. They testified to having seen her, and some with having conversed with her, since the day of her alleged murder. A dozen of such witnesses testified, each that he had seen her in a different place, distant from Chicago.

Other witnesses testified that Mrs. Salsbury had talked of running away from her husband and had given indications of unsoundness of mind. It was admitted by the defence that Mrs. Salsbury was jealous of her husband's attentions to other women, and probably with cause. Salsbury's actions in the factory the night of his wife's disappearance were explained by his testimony. He said he was experimenting with the manufacture of soft soap. He discharged the workmen from his factory and shut it down, he said, because he had discovered his wife's absence that morning, and he felt so distressed that he didn't want to be burdened with the cares of the factory, and no one could manage it but himself.

The rings were shown to him and he was asked if they were his wife's rings. He said they were not; that his wife's wedding ring had the word "Victoria" engraved in it.

In rebuttal, a jeweller and engraver testified that seventeen years

before he had sold such a ring to George Salsbury and had engraved on the inner side the initial letters "V. S." just as they were engraved in that ring.

There had been weeks of wrangling over the bones in evidence, between the scientists engaged as experts on both sides, and much doubt was thereby raised as to the bones being human. But there was no doubt as to the identity of the rings. The jury hesitated, and then convicted Salsbury, and his punishment was fixed at imprisonment for life.

Efforts to get a new trial for him failed. When it was undertaken to appeal the case it was found that Salsbury was penniless. His fortune had been dissipated and with it went his friends. He could not defray the cost of transcribing the voluminous record, and without a transcript of it there could be no appeal, and he was taken to the penitentiary.

As the prison doors were closing upon him, he reasserted his innocence and his belief that his wife would one day return. The prison officials said that every convict in the place contended he was innocent. Without any useless ceremony they clipped off his glossy black hair, shaved away the beard to which he had devoted so much care, denuded him of his fashionable worldly garb, put him in a suit of prison stripes and set him to drill in the lock step.

Thus stripped even of his name, and known instead by a number, his serene self-possession never left him. He was put at work in the stone yard of the prison and he worked at the hard labor cheerfully, although it blistered his hands. He was then set at menial work and he performed that as smilingly as if he had never been called the "King of the Subdivision." Then he was transferred to the drug dispensary, where his knowledge of drugs and chemistry would make him of more value to the economy of the prison. Now and then, as the years were passing, he would say his wife was slow in returning. As he never made complaint nor violated the prison regulations the guards, out of pity, would humor him and assent. Five, ten, fifteen years passed, and still he talked of his wife's returning. Still the guards assented, to humor him.

Twenty years had passed since he began his life sentence, when a woman called at the prison and asked to see George Salsbury.

She was taken to the visitors' room in the chaplain's office and told to wait. She shifted nervously in the chair till the door opened and a great, broad-shouldered man in striped prison clothing came shuffling in, in lock-step tread. His close-cropped hair and stubble beard were white, but his cheeks were ruddy and his eyes were clear. Twenty years of penal servitude had not broken his figure, although it had changed his hair and beard from black to white and had taken the majesty out of his stride. He stood erect almost as finely as when in the old days he stalked imperiously through the subdivision. He looked down on the bent little figure of the gray-haired woman who stood before him.

She studied him from head to foot before speaking.

"Don't you know me?" she said, calmly.

He shook his head doubtingly.

"I am your wife," and her thin, hard voice had not a quaver of emotion in it.

Knots and ridges stood out on his forehead. His breast heaved and his eyes flashed, but his arms remained hanging motionless at his side as twenty years of prison discipline had taught them.

"Can't you speak?" she said, sharply.

His lips relaxed into a sneering smile.

"I am your wife. You must know me."

"How did the rings get into the vat?" he asked, suddenly breaking his silence.

"I put them there."

An expression of doubt came into his face again.

She held up her left hand.

The ring finger was missing.

"Damn it, why didn't I think of that at the trial?"

The warden of the prison entered just then, having been secretly summoned by the chaplain, who was a witness to the strange and extraordinary meeting.

"This woman says she is Mrs. Salsbury," explained the chaplain.

"I would like to talk with her privately for a little while," said Salsbury.

The amazed officials gave consent and stood watching with staring eyes the strange couple conversing in whispers in the farthest corner of the room. For a quarter of an hour the whispered con-

versation continued and then Salsbury kissed her. Taking her hand he approached the waiting officials.

"Gentlemen, this is my wife. Talk with her and satisfy yourselves. Let me know as soon as you can when I will be free. May I return to my work?"

The warden nodded and Salsbury left the room without looking back or saying good-bye.

She sat down to talk with the officials. She said she had come back because she felt he had suffered enough, and wanted to have him released.

"Did you know he was in prison all the time?" asked the warden in new astonishment.

"Oh, yes. He wanted to put me away, but I was too quick and too shrewd for him, but that's all past now."

"Did you plan his conviction?"

"Yes; I can tell you all about it briefly. I knew for some time he was tired of me. He had got too rich for the wife that had helped to make his fortune and he wanted a divorce. I stole into the factory one night while he was talking in his private office with a woman and I overheard them. While I listened he promised this woman he would marry her as soon as I was out of his way. I need not describe my feelings. I was the same as any other woman at being scorned, but I knew more than other women in finding revenge.

"As I made my way through the darkness from the office my hand fell upon a hatchet. I knew as much about the factory, nearly, as he. I was thinking rapidly then. I hurried to the basement, to the big potash vat, taking the hatchet with me. I knew I couldn't pull the rings from my finger, so I placed the finger on the edge of the vat and chopped it off. It fell into the potash. I tied up my bleeding hand with my apron and hurried to the house. I gathered up a few things in a hurry and went away."

"And then?" asked the warden, prompting her to go on.

"The next day I wrote a note to the police in which I said: 'Mrs. Salsbury is missing. Look in the big potash vat in the basement of the George Salsbury Chemical Works.' I signed no name to it."

"Where did you go when you left the house?"

"That's all I will tell you. That's enough for you to know. I was dead to the world and dead to myself all these years."

Further endeavors to learn something of her movements during her absence were fruitless. The only question with which the prison officials were concerned was whether she was really Mrs. Salsbury. The chaplain's account of the meeting seemed to set all doubts at rest for a moment, only to raise them the next instant. Would husband and wife have acted so, they asked themselves. Since husband and wife never before met under such circumstances the question could not be answered by precedent. The story she told was the strangest that had ever been recited in that prison, and yet the warden believed it. The whole affair was utterly lacking in human probability, and yet he could not escape the conviction that it was true.

For the guidance of the prison warden, there were the acts of the courts. A court had declared Mrs. Salsbury to be dead, and he was bound by his oath of office to accept the decree. Nevertheless, he believed it was she who stood before him in life. Bereft of its complexities, however, the situation presented the simple alternatives of leaving Salsbury in prison or of proving the identity of the woman as Mrs. Victoria Salsbury. If the latter were done the courts would quickly restore her legal existence and the release of her husband would follow.

Mrs. Salsbury was taken to Chicago and turned over to the police for identification. There were many policemen who knew her husband, but none knew her. Twenty years had wrought great changes. The old factory and the house of the Salsburys were among the few things there in the subdivision that time had not changed. They were standing tenantless, sadly weather-beaten, and going to decay. Through these scenes Mrs. Salsbury was taken and she proved her familiarity with them by references to the past. There had been a skating pond in the prairie. Now it was studded with brick and stone houses. There had been a row of frame cottages occupied by the families of men who worked for her husband; now a solid row of massive business houses stood there. A great cluster of lilac bushes grew in the yard back of her kitchen window, she said. The clump of bushes, surviving

the years, was still there. She described the interior arrangement of the house and of the factory correctly. She stood by the vat in the basement again, and showed how she had chopped off her finger so that the rings could be cast into the potash and produce evidence that would convict her husband of murder.

All of this, however convincing to the policemen who accompanied her, was not court evidence. She was not yet identified. No one appeared who would say positively that she was Mrs. Salsbury. Then it was learned that in a distant part of the city the former night watchman of the factory was still living. Without telling her where she was being taken or notifying him, she was confronted with the old watchman. He was an old man twenty years before, and now in his last days he was blind.

"Isn't that old Jan?" she asked, with a show of surprise when she saw him.

The old man started at the sound of her voice and offered to rise from his chair. He was feeble and dropped back into it.

"Who speaks?" he cried, while his lips trembled and his hands clutched the arms of the chair nervously.

"Don't tell him who you are," whispered one of the policemen.

"Don't you know me?" she asked.

"No, no. I thought it was — it sounded like *her* voice," said the old man, shaking his head.

"Like whose voice?" she asked.

"It is the voice of a woman long dead, so they say, but I won't say it. I said enough then, but I told the truth."

"Suppose that woman is living."

"If she is, then you are that woman. You are Mrs. Salsbury."

"I am Mrs. Salsbury."

The old man lifted his hands, uttering praises to God, while tears streamed down his furrowed cheeks.

The testimony of this tottering, sightless old man was adduced in legal form in corroboration of Mrs. Salsbury's own testimony. There was no evidence in contradiction, and as there was no protest of the identification she was declared to be living and an order was issued to set George Salsbury free.

"The rings?" asked Mrs. Salsbury. "I am again his legal wife. I want my wedding ring."

In a musty corner of the vault of the criminal court clerk's office the rings were found and restored to her.

That night her husband came out of the penitentiary, and she was walking by his side. Before leaving the prison he made a written statement, which he instructed the warden to give to the newspapers. It read:

"I am going back into the world to make another fortune. That is all I care for. This is all I care to say for publication.

GEORGE SALSBURY."

Salsbury and his wife disappeared on their arrival in Chicago. The next the public knew of him he was the lessee of the old factory and residence in the subdivision. Not long afterward, smoke was coming out of the big chimney again. He had renovated the building, gathered workmen and material and once more the George Salsbury Chemical Works were in operation. He had proceeded with marvellous rapidity for a man seeking countenance among business men as an ex-convict, denuded of friends, of credit, of reputation and broken in purse. Wagons soon were busy hauling to and from the factory, and before the year was ended the working force had been increased to the extent of the factory's capacity, working day and night. It was said that while in prison he had discovered many secrets of chemical processes, of value in manufacturing, in addition to those he had employed to make his business successful before.

Almost as fast as his fortune had run away from him, it came pouring back. When riches began to return to him he was again called the "King of the Subdivision," as he stalked its highways. He was imperious and reserved in other days. Now he was imperious and morose. He dressed with his former scrupulous regard for fashion, and his beard, now white and grown again, he trimmed with nice care. Again he had fine horses and coaches and coachmen in his stable.

If he were unhappy, no one could be sure of it. People never discussed the question of his happiness without speaking of his wife. She never went driving with him, in fact she scarcely left the house, and had not been known to go outside the yard since her return. Some of the neighboring women called to visit her as the nearby housewives did in the old days. The servant who answered the ringing of the doorbell told them Mrs. Salsbury did

not care to receive visitors. None other called and she remained secluded. She seemed unhappy and broken in spirit and formed a pathetic contrast with her mastering, self-sufficient and kingly husband. The neighbors said she was suffering the pangs of remorse and was denying herself in expiation of the wrong she had done her husband. People expressed sympathy for him on account of the suffering he had unjustly endured and felt pleasure that he was prospering again. None had sympathy for her, though many felt pity.

Whether he loved her now, or whether it were possible to love one so miserable, the people asked one another. And they asked one another if he had forgiven her, or if it were possible to forgive a wife who had planned with such diabolism the death of her husband. These questions found no satisfying answer, nor did the question of how much justification she was entitled to plead by the knowledge that her husband had conspired with another woman to cast her off. The conclusion was reached, however, by most people that he didn't seem to have any love for her. And now that he was free they wondered that he lived with her at all, but whatever he felt toward her was his secret.

By day and by night his factory was kept going with relays of workmen, and the demand for its product always exceeding the output. When it was suggested that he enlarge the factory, he curtly answered that it was large enough to please him. It was just the same as when he owned and managed it before. He added nothing nor made any alterations. He had simply restored it.

One day he bought a new vehicle. He had bought one each year since he returned to his factory, and this was the fifth. It was a trap with a high-perched seat and brilliant and gorgeous trimmings. The next afternoon he appeared on the driver's seat, guiding two dark bay horses that pranced proudly in their gilded harness. A footman sat behind. He drew up to the front gate and waited. He had never done that before. The front door of the house opened and Mrs. Salsbury came out, gorgeously dressed and smiling. The footman assisted her to the high seat beside her husband, who held the lines. They drove away and it was nearly sundown when they returned. She was smiling still and he was laughing and talking to her as if he were in a jovial mood. The

neighborly folks of the subdivision gossipped about the event until late that night.

Salsbury entered the factory just before the night shift came to work. He called the foremen and told them the factory would not be run that night. The foremen knew the press of orders for goods was always greater than the capacity to supply them, but they knew the master of the factory. He never asked their advice nor took suggestions from them. He was master there and they obeyed. The men of the night shift came and were turned away.

The next morning the factory doors were locked when the workmen arrived. The clerks and the men of all the departments of the factory stood around outside, wondering and waiting. At one o'clock the front door of the factory was opened and Salsbury stood on the threshold. The men scarcely knew him. He was stooped and his face was seamed and haggard. Only the day before they had seen him erect and ruddy cheeked. Now his eye was dull and his hand was trembling. He surveyed the crowd for awhile but no one spoke to him.

"Are all of the men here?" he asked.

"I think so," said a foreman.

"Tell them to come in and get their money."

The men filed in and the accountants and clerks went to their places in the office and made out the time of the men and gave them the wages due. Salsbury was sitting in his private office with his head resting on his arms on the desk. The chief clerk went to the door of the office and stopped. Salsbury looked up.

"What shall I do now?" asked the clerk.

"Are the men all paid?"

"Yes."

"Have you got your wages?"

"Yes."

"Go."

"Isn't the factory going to run any more?"

"Fool!"

The clerk backed away in silence. Salsbury rose and staggered out of the office. All of the employés had gone, except the office men.

"I said go," he shrieked.

They silently obeyed. The door was slammed after them and they heard the bolt turn in its lock.

No sign of life was seen about the factory for two days, and then the police came. They knocked at the doors, but got no answer. They went to the house, but it, too, seemed deserted, and in the stable they found the horses, untended and unfed. The police looked at one another as if each knew what the other was thinking. One old man among them had worked on the "Salsbury case" twenty-five years before. They asked his opinion.

"I have long since learned to be cautious," he said. "I helped convict that man, and I lived to see his wife come back."

They returned to the station and a council was held, with the result that all of the available men at the station were sent out on the new Salsbury case. The footman was found quickly. He said he had been discharged without notice or explanation as soon as he returned to the stable the afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Salsbury went driving. The other stable employés and the house servants were dismissed at the same time.

Policemen were posted in the shadows that night, watching every door of the house and of the factory. At one o'clock in the morning Salsbury was seen to come out of the rear door of the factory, cross the back yard and enter the house by the rear door. He remained in the house half an hour and returned to the factory by the way he had come. Nothing more was learned on the premises by the police, but other men working on the case brought in a mass of information, all of which contributed to the suspicions of the police, and all remarkably like the circumstances of the Salsbury case of a quarter of a century before. Then it was recalled that the night the factory was shut down was the anniversary of the disappearance of Mrs. Salsbury. It was the same day of the year, month and week.

At noon the police forced open a door of the residence and entered. No one was there. The rear door of the factory was then broken and the police went in. They explored it cautiously until they reached Salsbury's private office. There they found the master of the factory with his head on his arms resting on a desk.

He raised his head slowly. His eyes were bloodshot, his face was haggard, seamed and soiled, and his hair was dishevelled.

"What did you come for?" he asked, calmly.

"We thought something might be wrong — that you might be sick," said the commanding officer, pleasantly.

"You're a liar. You came to arrest me."

"Why, what have you done?" he demanded in startled tones.

"Killed her! What do you suppose I did?"

"When?"

"Read the indictment. I followed it to the letter. If you don't believe me, go down to the vat and fish the rings out again."

"You say you have murdered your wife!" exclaimed the officer, snatching the paper from the grimy and wrinkled hand of the old man.

"Oh, that need not concern you any; I've been tried for that crime."

The Pillow of Justice.*

BY E. S. INNET.

STEPHEN ROGERS was riding through a jungle in Ceylon, meditating upon the vanity of human wishes when concerned with coffee planting. He had sent his coolie on ahead with his kit, with orders to await him at the next Government Rest-house, which was not far distant, so the fact that it was raining tropical torrents did not in the least disturb him. With an immediate change of raiment in prospect the rain was a godsend, for it banished the myriads of insects which ordinarily make life in the jungle a burden.

Rogers was attired in regular plantation garb, thin white clothing and the planter's double hat. On reaching the Rest-house he dismounted and shouted for his coolie. The latter did not appear but the man in charge did, and to him Rogers committed the care of his horse and entered, riding whip in hand. He meant to use it when he found the delinquent native, but that worthy was nowhere to be seen, and the keeper, returning from putting up the horse, said no such person had arrived there that night.

Rogers exhausted his vocabulary, which was varied and expressive, in voicing his opinion of the coolie, the climate, the country,

*This is one of two stories that won the $500 prize in the competition ending March 31, 1898.

and coffee planting. Having thus relieved his mind, he turned on the keeper, now reduced to a state of tremulous humility, and demanded clothes. "Sahib clothes" the man had not, but there were certain rags—if the Sahib would deign? The Sahib would, for he knew the peril of letting his clothing dry on his back, so presently he was arrayed in a new and gaudy dress, consisting of a sort of kilt, a coarse white shirt and a species of jacket embroidered in various colors. Being a large man and the Rest-house keeper small even for a native, the young planter was not unaware that he looked supremely ridiculous as he strode into the big eating room.

He had scarcely been served when a door leading into one of the little rooms opened, and a lady entered and seated herself at the same table. She was not Indian, not European, but of that degree known as Eurasian, and Rogers, when he came to himself sufficiently to be observant, saw that she was strikingly beautiful. Now, despite the rough and ready life he had been leading, he was a gentleman at heart, and it horrified him to think she must have heard his remarks in regard to the coolie.

"Thank you," said the young woman in English, as he awkwardly passed her something.

Rogers colored under his bronze skin and became acutely conscious of the five or six inches of muscular arm which showed beyond the abbreviated sleeves of his jacket. But his companion's self-poise was perfect, and he was soon chatting with her quite at his ease. It seemed that she was waiting for her escort, which had been delayed.

The young planter naturally regarded her with some curiosity. She was of queenly stature, and was gowned in soft draperies of spun silk of many colors, in which crimson predominated. The bodice was gracefully swathed about her form and caught upon the shoulder and at the breast and waist by curiously shaped dragons of yellow gold set with fine rubies. It was impossible to guess her age. A strange perfume hung about her, diffusing itself with every movement. Unlike anything he had ever experienced before, it yet had a slight similarity to the odor of the Champak flower; it was subtile, fresh, and indescribably soothing.

After the repast the Rest-house keeper announced that the

Sahib's clothes were dry, and Rogers retired. When he reappeared half an hour later, attired in his own garments and feeling much more at his ease, he found the young woman still sitting in the big eating room. She did not seem averse to continuing the conversation, looking approvingly at the young man, who was, indeed, a fine-looking fellow, with plenty of those two qualities so admired by women — self-reliance and strength. She asked him many questions; he remembered afterward that they all related to English modes of governing, and regulations regarding mines.

They were thus mutually entertained when suddenly there came a horrible cry, a cry choked in the gurgle of blood. Ghastly and unnatural as it was, they yet recognized it as the voice of the Rest-house keeper.

Rogers was a man trained to action and emergencies. The cry had not died upon the shuddering air before he had thrust the woman into one of the little rooms, caught the table and dragged it after him, put his back against the door, the table before him, and prepared to defend himself and her. These precautions only took seconds, but ere they were completed the entrance was thronged with evil brown faces and hands brandishing native swords and daggers. Rogers had his revolver going before they had well seen him, and it checked the first impetus of their attack, but he knew he could not hold them long, for though they evidently had no guns, one determined rush would overwhelm him. It was a brief fight, for while his shots told, his assailants were many. The rush came. He fired his last shot full into the breast of the nearest man, who fell across the table, caught the dying wretch's sword out of his hand, his dagger out of his sash, gave a shout — and they were upon him. He cut, and slashed, and thrust, with his back to the door and his face ever to the foe; he was wounded in a dozen places, despairing courage flamed in his eyes. The odds made hope vain, but the lust of battle was on him, and behind him, sheltered only by his courage, a defenseless woman trembled.

The scene swam before his eyes in a crimson haze. He felt a needle-like pain in his sword arm, and perceived the ring of his blade on the floor as it fell from his nerveless hand. Something red hot seemed to pierce his throat, and he knew he was done.

He choked and went down with a last consciousness of a terrible crash, before which his assailants vanished. "This is death," he thought. And then there was a calm.

. . . . . .

Rogers's coolie was the first on the scene. He stayed only to discover that his master was alive, then mounted his horse and rode away for help. In the outer room they found the Rest-house keeper stabbed through the jugular vein with a dagger.

The room where the young man lay was like a shamble. There were ten dead men there, hardly one of whom was not slashed and cut. He had made a good fight, the surgeon said grimly, and hoped to be able to pull him through, though his sword arm was terribly cut at the elbow joint, in such a fashion that although he could afterward use it well, it was never quite straight again, and his shoulder was pierced by a vicious blow evidently aimed at the throat. He also had a deep cut on the head and twenty or more lesser wounds. He was months in recovering, lying for weeks in delirium, fighting the battle over again, tormented always by one malignant face which seemed to have been fixed upon his retina when he fell, and which was imaged upon his poor, disordered brain in fantastic visions.

When he came to himself he said nothing about the woman. He was vaguely afraid of doing her harm, as he fancied her presence there might have been a secret she would wish preserved. The facts of the fight indicated simply that ill-disposed natives had attacked the Rest-house and had been in turn attacked and shot through the door from behind. This explained the crash Rogers had heard as he fell, and the vanishing of his assailants, who had been swept down by bullets as growing grain is leveled by hail. In his own mind he was convinced that the men who had so opportunely arrived were the lady's escort, and this gave him hope that she had escaped.

By the time he was up and about his coffee plantation was a thing of the past. It was the beginning of the fungoid disease which ruined the Ceylon coffee planters, and he was among the first to feel its effects. He was a true citizen of the world, however, and lost no time in repining, but shook the dust of Ceylon from his feet and went tea-planting in Japan.

He took little from Ceylon with him, but one article in his scanty luggage was strangely out of keeping with the rest of his utilitarian outfit. This was a gorgeous silken pillow embroidered in pure gold thread, and emitting a faint, delicate perfume, the same odor, vaguely suggestive of the Champak flower, which had distinguished the mysterious woman at the Rest-house. It had been found in one of the chambers, and those who cared for him concluded it was his, — some souvenir that he was sending home, — so they put it among his belongings. Rogers appropriated it, feeling he had the best right to it.

It was embroidered with the winged dragons which had clasped the woman's robe, and had an outer cover with the same symbol upon it.

By the time he got to Japan the pillow had imparted its strange perfume to all the clothing in the trunk. People remarked upon it, and ladies begged to be told its name. He developed a certain innocent conceit over it, such as he felt about his cat's-eye ring and the thin, hand-spun silk shirts he always wore; but as these were his only bachelor vanities, they were, perhaps, excusable in such a gallant, big-souled fellow. He grew tea in Japan and made more money out of the curiosities he sent to London auctioneers than he did out of his plantations. He grew raisins in California, and was ruined because an expected import duty on the Spanish product was not put on. He grew coffee in Mexico and the Fiji Islands, and finally landed back in Ceylon, this time to raise tea, for the soil, which is too poor to grow healthy coffee trees, produces first-class tea, and tea is rapidly rehabilitating Ceylon.

During all his peregrinations he still retained the memory of the mysterious woman of the Rest-house. She was his standard of beauty, by which he judged all other women and found them wanting; and he carefully cherished the embroidered pillow, which, gorgeous enough for a queen's boudoir, he always kept safely in its outer cover. At times, too, he was haunted in his dreams by the malignant face which had so tormented him in his delirium after the fight.

He had a partner in his new tea venture, a young man named Paxton, to whom he had taken a strong fancy. One night as

they sat smoking and drinking rickys, Rogers, being in an expansive mood, related the story of the battle more fully than he had ever done before.

Paxton was intensely interested. "By Jove!" he said, "did you never hear about the fabulous ruby mine and the beautiful white woman who governs the tribe that owns it?"

"No," said Rogers. "Fire away."

"Why, that's all. They say there's a ruby mine up in the hills somewhere, and that the men who work it are ruled by a woman of remarkable beauty and wealth. Their religion and government are different from those of the other tribes, and they are tremendously rich. You never can tell, of course, when the natives are lying and when they're not, but I've heard great yarning over it in the Bazars. When any of the dealers got hold of a fine ruby there was always gossip over it. I was told that the 'white woman' is really an Eurasian, the daughter of an Indian princess and a Certain Somebody very high up in the government. Anyhow, they say this woman pays the taxes for the whole tribe and brings them down herself, so that the collector never goes near their settlement. I've heard all kind of yarns; that she comes dressed like a princess, disguised as a pauper, alone, with a queenly retinue, and, in fact, there is no conjecture too wild to tack onto the ruby mine in the hills. But, mind you, I wouldn't wonder if there was some truth in it."

Rogers puffed reflectively at his pipe. "It was just about tribute time when I saw the woman at the Rest-house," he said. "I remember I had been considerably worried over the tax question that year."

"Really!" exclaimed Paxton, who had spent all his life in India and Ceylon, and knew enough to treat seriously what newcomers are wont to scoff at. "Well, there's more truth than fable in some of these Indian tales. Wouldn't it be great if the mysterious woman of the Rest-house and the queen of the ruby settlement were one and the same?"

"I could do nicely with a ruby mine," said the young planter reflectively. "And she was a fine woman."

"'The price of a virtuous woman is above rubies,'" quoted his partner chaffingly, "but personally I prefer the rubies."

"Just wait a bit," said Rogers oracularly. "You'll fall head over heels in love some day. As for me, I'd be jolly well satisfied with the 'white woman' without the ruby mine."

"Swallow your own pills!" laughed Paxton. "But suppose there is some truth in the ruby mine business? Let's make inquiries." And they did.

At length, by means of bribes, questions, and conjectures, they pieced out a half-believable story about an isolated hill tribe, over which a woman ruled and which was reputedly very wealthy. But the hillsmen were fierce, there were wild beasts in the jungle, and the supine natives of the lower levels had enough to eat without much exertion. What strange creatures were Sahibs who exerted themselves so unnecessarily! Yet if the Sahibs wanted a guide, surely the whole district would question his brother or his friend and spread the news abroad, that one might be found. Was it the will of God to keep the Sahibs on the plantations to exact so many hours' work a day when they themselves desired to be looking for a "lost feather" many days' journey hence? No, assuredly not! The bread-fruit was ripe. Its odor filled the air. They had but to pluck and eat. A sickness had taken the coffee plants; what more likely than that it should take the tea? So if the Sahibs complained, why, who can fight against the Evil One who spoiled the coffee? Besides, that was away in the future; meantime the Sahibs clamored to be gone. Finally a man was found in a neighboring village who said he could guide the Sahibs to the hidden kingdom in the heart of the mountains. But he sent word by the go-between that the passes leading to the isolated community were guarded and the country dangerous. He could not guarantee the safety of the Sahibs.

The Sahibs sent a message to say that they were going on a friendly mission, not for plunder, and therefore expected to pass unchallenged. To this the guide sent back word that the lonely tribe spoke a different tongue from the plains people, and might not understand. The Sahibs replied that they would look after their own safety, and that what they needed was a guide, not a guard. Apropos of this, however, Paxton suggested that they take the perfumed pillow along, as the winged dragons upon it might be an insignia of the woman's royalty, and that in the

event of their language proving unintelligible it would serve as a sort of passport. So they packed it up with the rest of their kit; it went into little bulk and added practically nothing to the weight.

So one morning the two set forth to "seek a lost feather," as the natives said, meeting their guide at a Rest-house some twenty miles away. The moment Rogers saw him he had a sense of familiarity, and was also conscious of a feeling of repulsion.

The man was in no particular respect unprepossessing. His eyes were shifty and his mouth a little cruel, but these expressions are not unusual in natives. His most noticeable peculiarity, however, was his nostrils, which were wide and flexible, like those of an animal. Rogers looked at his partner to judge of the impression their guide had made upon him. Paxton said nothing till the man had left the room, then he declared himself. "So that's Doonga! Well, I could eat all of him I like!"

Rogers felt oppressed at hearing his own inexplicable prejudice put into words, but he laughed and said: —

"Oh, well, 'in for a penny, in for a pound.' I don't doubt he'll bear watching; but Lord! most of them will. If my gentleman tries any tricks there will be one more in Nirvana in short order."

They stayed that night at the Rest-house, and set forth the next morning, their guide maintaining an attitude of respectful humility. Their next stage took them to the next Rest-house, where their horses were left. Here their packs were made up into three, and they struck off through the jungle, where they journeyed three days without notable adventure. Upon the third day, the way being very arduous, their guide, with much submission, asked if he should carry their guns. He was well used to such journeyings, he said, and the Sahibs were not.

"No," said Rogers sardonically, "you need not take the guns, but since you are able, you can take an extra pack."

For the next few hours, till sundown, Doonga toiled on with his double burden. He found abundant reason for pitching camp early, and Rogers, who was good-natured, had not the heart to prolong the march.

"He won't be so quick offering to take the guns another time," he said to Paxton. "I'm keeping tabs on him. Did you hear him singing this morning?"

"I heard him *yowling!*"

"Well, it's all the same thing, only he was chanting, 'Follow, follow, follow, we go — we go — to the land of precious stones!' He thought I didn't know the lingo, and when I asked him what he was making such a row for, he said it was a prayer-song, and very holy. It didn't sound very sanctified to me, it sounded more like a tip to some one."

"Jove!"

"Yes, I think we are probably being followed by some of Doonga's pals, so after this we won't both sleep at once. We'll take turns at watching; not a sentry go, you understand, just a still watch."

This they did. In the small hours of the morning Paxton, who was on guard, saw Doonga leave his mat and disappear in the jungle, and immediately awakened Rogers. In an hour the guide reappeared and approached the two men stealthily, and as they were both seemingly asleep, he beckoned toward the jungle, from which crept a man, who waited at a little distance. Doonga bent silently over the packs, drew out something from them, and going to his companion, seemed to exhibit it, after which he brought it back. As he returned, a glint of moonlight shone upon the broideries of the perfumed pillow.

The stranger disappeared in the jungle, and the guide, having replaced the pillow, went placidly to sleep.

Next morning Rogers asked Doonga how far they were from the mountain pass which led into the hidden valley. One day's journey, he said; by the next day, at noon, they would arrive. That day the traveling was terrible, the pathless jungle seeming more impenetrable, more impassable than ever. Early in the afternoon Paxton tripped over a peculiarly twisted creeper and came down full length, landing in a nest of ground-partridge eggs, which bedaubed him finely. He said evil words under his breath, and Rogers could hardly keep his face straight. They toiled on for two hours, Indian file, after the guide, then Rogers plucked his comrade by the sleeve, pointing to where, near a grotesquely gnarled creeper, there was a nestful of broken eggs. The guide was leading them in a circle, probably giving time for his confederates to come up with them.

A very ugly look came into the young planter's eyes. "Collar Doonga," he said briefly, "and hold him."

Paxton obeyed with alacrity, the native starting nervously as he felt a vigorous hand close upon his arm. Rogers tightened his belt, took the knapsack from his shoulders and began to climb a tall, slender tree. He went up slowly, but presently was well above the lesser growths, and when he got among the higher branches he saw the hills for which they were aiming, a few hours' journey away. They must try to reach them at all costs that night, for whatever welcome awaited them there was safer than to trust to the hospitality of the jungle with Doonga's friends as hosts. He descended, explained briefly to Paxton, and then they struck out at right angles through the jungle, fixing their path from point to point by aid of trees and holding an unswervingly straight course, while they kept Doonga between them, telling him now and then what they thought of him. Night was falling when the jungle began to grow less dense. They were nearing the plain at the foot of the hills.

"Hurry, you black hound!" said Rogers to his captive, who was doing everything possible to retard their progress, and who now set up piercing cries for mercy. His captor whipped out his revolver, and the shrieks subsided.

"Well, he has effectually warned his pals," he remarked. "I don't know what holds my hand that I don't put a bullet through him."

"A prejudice against cold blood," replied Paxton. "It's a great hamper to decent men."

At that moment from all around them came the melancholy cries of the moonbird. The two travelers paled slightly, and looked at each other. The cry of the moonbird is the signal of a murderous society after the order of Thugs, only they stab their victims through the throat instead of strangling them, and this fact was well known to both men.

A malignant spark glowed in the eyes of the guide, an evil pride shone balefully upon his countenance, while his nostrils dilated like those of a beast of prey when he scents blood. At that moment a recollection came to Rogers that almost unnerved him. He knew now why Doonga looked so familiar. This was

the malignant face which had so long haunted his dreams, and which had tormented him in his delirium after the Rest-house battle.

They hastened on, Rogers clutching Doonga with one hand and his revolver with the other, knowing by a rustle now and then in the underbrush that they had an unseen malevolent escort.

When at length they reached the little strip of plain some two miles broad it was too dark to see clearly, but the mountain facing them seemed to be cleft in two. They knew that if they attempted to cross that plain the assassins would surround them and rush them into the open, and that a stand for the night must be made. A tree stood at some little distance from the last fringe of underbrush, and here they decided to camp. One of them guarded Doonga and watched the jungle while the other made preparations for the night, which were simple, as they did not propose to erect the little tent; and in place of the usual evening meal they took a light lunch standing. They then bound Doonga hand and foot, and removed his weapons, which consisted of a dagger of peculiar shape, and a revolver marked with Rogers's name — the same which he had hurled into the faces of the ruffians at the Rest-house. When these were taken from him the guide set up a howl. Rogers, standing on guard beside the packs, caught up the perfumed pillow and threw it over to his partner.

"Clap that on his ugly face," he said, "and keep it there till he shuts up."

Paxton caught it. As the native realized his purpose fear crept over his face, distorting his features, and he uttered an involuntary scream. In an instant his voice was stifled by the pressure of the perfumed pillow. At first he struggled violently, then his muscles relaxed, when the pillow was instantly removed. Doonga lay smiling up, his face strangely livid in the light of the tiny fire.

"Lord!" said Paxton. "I hope I haven't smothered him."

"Small odds," replied Rogers, "only it's been too quick. Something slow is what he needs."

He broke off suddenly, for Doonga was beginning to talk in a low, dreamy voice. Paxton leaned over to listen.

"He's gabbling all sorts of things," he said, "about a 'pillow of justice' and so on. Whatever is the matter with him?"

"Watch out," said Rogers; "he's up to some deviltry, you may be sure."

"Only the good rest well upon the pillow of justice," said Doonga distinctly.

"Well, that lets you out," said Paxton. "You're not one of the holy, are you?"

"I am of the Sacred Seventh Circle of the Slayers," replied the guide.

Paxton shuddered. "I say," he said, "are they —"

"Yes," said Rogers, "they are the beauties who stab through the throat; Thugs, simply, with another method. That devil's in a trance, though goodness only knows what threw him into it. Maybe he'll answer questions. Come here and keep guard, and let me have a try with him. There are two men in the shadow of that clump of mimosas," he added. "Just keep a bead on them. It won't harm if you bag one." Then he said, addressing the guide: "Doonga! Where is the road to the hidden valley?"

"Between the two white rocks," said the native promptly.

"Is it guarded?"

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"By those who kill strangers."

"At whose command?"

"It is the law."

"Whose law?"

"The law of the hidden valley."

"How may we enter?"

"By showing the winged dragon."

"Why did you come hither?"

"To gain entrance with my friends to the hidden valley."

"How?"

"By aid of the pillow of justice."

"What is the pillow of justice?"

"It is a charm which makes the dumb speak, it is the possession of the rulers of the hidden valley. It was left by the Queen in a Rest-house, and taken away over seas by a devil Sahib. But our soothsayers said he would return again with it, and so we believed and waited till he came, and lo! he is in the hands of my brothers. He goes about perfumed with the sacred scent of hidden kings, but I, Doonga, have delivered him into the hands of the slayers."

At that instant Paxton fired. "Bagged him!" he exclaimed.

"Good!" said Rogers laconically. "Where are the White Rocks?" he asked Doonga. The native was silent. "Doonga!" he called sharply, "where are the White Rocks?"

"Here, near at hand, straight as the bird flies." His voice died away to a whisper, nor could he be aroused to further speech.

Rogers left him and went to his friend. A dozen flitting figures hovered in the shadow of the mimosas. "Paxton," he whispered, "you heard what he said. We are in a desperate strait, and must resort to a desperate expedient to get out of it. I am sure what the beggar said was true. I want you to crawl away through the grass and try to get to the sentries at the foot of the mountain. Take the pillow with you, and use it for all it is worth. Try to get them to come and help me, and if they won't, get access to the Queen. She will help me on the double quick. You must see that it's our only chance. They'll rush us after a bit, and you know what that means!"

"But, Rogers —"

"Go!" was the answer; and Paxton suddenly felt very young and weak before the force of this man's character. "You'll have to crawl a long way through the grass, so you'd better tie the pillow on your back."

Paxton did so. It was now so dark that these preparations could not be seen by their enemies, but this advantage was offset by the fact that the movements of those in ambush were equally invisible. The young man had barely started on his perilous mission when he turned back for an instant.

"Rogers, old man!" His voice was thick; their hands found each other in the dark.

"Be off!" said Rogers, authoritatively but gently. "And if they do me up — tell Her what I thought of her."

"You shall tell her yourself," replied Paxton stoutly, and set forth once more.

His journey seemed long. He crawled painfully forward, and when some hundreds of yards from the camp was startled by the sound of breathing close beside him. He paused and held his breath; then, loud and clear, came the call of a moonbird, which was answered by some one upon the other side. He knew then

they were surrounding Rogers, and that he must be through the circle. He rose and ran as he had never run before, and his breath was like flame in his throat. At length he saw a faint glimmer of light, and rushed headlong toward it, when suddenly he was brought to a halt.

"Who goes? Stand and speak!"

"The pillow of justice," he gasped, turning to a sentinel who had apparently risen from the earth, with leveled gun.

"Come," said the sentinel.

In ten minutes Paxton stood in the midst of a throng of natives, and unloosening the pillow held it out. They salaamed and fell back, and presently an old man richly clad appeared, for whom all made way. He also salaamed at sight of the pillow.

"Do you bring tidings of the battle of the Rest-house?" he asked in excellent English.

Paxton gasped. "Yes, yes!" he cried. "The man who saved the 'white lady' is out there on the plains by the peepul tree, surrounded by murderers, led by one who escaped from the Rest-house."

The old man turned to his followers, a fiery indignation in his eye. "You hear," he said. "Fly to the rescue! The peepul tree shelters the savior of the Queen."

In an instant they had all fallen into line, fully armed, a young native with a crimson headdress in command, and in three minutes they were leaping across the plain. As Paxton endeavored to follow he was restrained by the old man.

"No, pardon, Sahib, you will stay!" he said.

"But —"

"He will be saved if it be the will of God to save him," said the old man gravely, and led the way through a narrow portal into a street of a garrison village at the foot of the mountain. Dozens of soldiers were swarming out into the highways.

"I am glad to see thee," said the old man. "The Queen has ever said that the Sahib would return bringing the precious pillow of justice, and for these years past I have abode at the foot of the mountain ready to give a fitting welcome. It has been weary waiting. I shall be glad to get back to the mountain."

In an hour the rescuers returned with Rogers. The two friends wrung each other's hands. "They had me tree'd," said the young planter. "They were just surrounding me when you left. They hadn't any guns, you know, so I shinned up the tree and popped away at them. Doonga didn't have a very good time of it when the rescuers arrived. I didn't look any more than I could help. It was horrible!"

"Served him right," said Paxton, who hadn't seen the wretch's death and could not comprehend the horror of it.

. . . . . .

It is many years now since the two travelers were carried triumphantly up the long defile which gives entrance to the hidden valley; many years since Rogers's eager eyes searched a woman's face for a sign and found in her sweet eyes the promise of perfect happiness; many years since he was told the properties of the pillow of justice, upon which no person could lay his head and withhold the truth, but must needs answer every question asked, even to the secrets of his soul, so strange and subtile was the perfume prepared by the ancestress of the Queen, a perfume sacred to the rulers of the hidden valley.

The wealth of the valley was no fable. Its people were contented and happy, and glad to receive Rogers as co-ruler with their queen, in whose veins flowed the best blood of Ceylon and England. He found it easy to secure the claims of his wife and her people, and their possessions are now duly attested.

Paxton remained with them for a long time, but there was no beautiful queen to complete his paradise, so after a bit he wandered afield to England, Holland, and America, seeking markets for the gems. Upon one of these journeys he met his fate, and a very gay couple they are; the rubies worn by the young wife are the envy of every one.

Far away in the East Rogers rules a little kingdom wisely and well. There is no shadow of inequity in his realm, for judgments are given solely upon testimony elicited by the subtile magic of the pillow of justice. But even its enchantment cannot find one thought of distrust or unhappiness in the hearts of Rogers and his beautiful wife.

The Lost Jurisdiction.*

BY ELLIS MEREDITH.

THE proprietor of the barnlike, ramshackle hotel looked uneasily across the dining room. It had but two occupants beside himself. One was a small, badly dressed woman. She was of middle age, but her shoulders seemed bent with some great burden of grief rather than the weight of years. Her eyes were dull and sunken as if from many tears. She was eating her breakfast perfunctorily, and reading some well-worn papers as she did so. The other lady had just entered the room, and was walking toward the table at which the little woman was seated. She was tall, and the pallor of her classic face, as well as her perfectly fitting gown, indicated that she was a newcomer in that wind-swept Western country. She had been ordered to "rough it" for a time, and was a comparatively new acquisition in this desolate border town. She was somewhat imperious in her demands, and she tipped the waiter and the chambermaid in a matter-of-fact way, to their undisguised amazement. Josiah Barnes looked on her as a godsend, a windfall, an oasis in the great American desert, that all for which his thrifty soul did

*This is one of the two stories that received the 5th prize of $250 in THE BLACK CAT prize competition which closed March 31, 1898.

pine, a green isle in the sea, a fountain and a shrine, and various other desirable things.

Therefore the soul of the worthy Josiah was troubled when he saw her cross the dreary room and sit down within a yard or so of the other woman. He hesitated a moment only; duty was plain and fifteen dollars a week not to be jeopardized. He shuffled across the room and, leaning somewhat heavily on the back of Miss Vallery's chair, whispered in a wheezing and entirely audible voice: —

"P'raps ye'd ruther hev yer breakfast brung to the other table?"

"Why?" asked Miss Vallery languidly. The constantly displayed interest in her welfare was rather a bore.

"Well, — ye see, Miss, that's the mother of the murderer!" He made a poor attempt to lower his voice, but the small woman heard him, and the flush that mounted to the roots of her faded, nondescript hair was painful to see. She half rose, her eyes filled, and her tightly compressed lips twitched. Jean Vallery saw all this without looking up. She settled herself a little more comfortably, and said in a matter-of-fact way, as if answering a question, "Thank you, Mr. Barnes; I should like to have my mail, if you don't mind sending for it."

With the air of having done his duty Mr. Barnes shuffled away, leaving Jean to her fried steak and reflections. First and last, she had heard a good deal about the murderer, Tom Rhoads, who seemed to surpass all the villains of history, according to the editorials in *The Clarion*, and the talk of the townspeople. The murder had been committed early in the summer, and it was now September, but the good people of that vicinity had not yet done talking of it. The trial was to come off within the next two weeks.

When Mr. Barnes returned with the mail he brought also a letter for Mrs. Rhoads; he returned to his post by the door rather slowly, watching to see the effect of this communication on his undesirable patron. The envelope bore the name of a law firm in one of the eastern towns of the State, and Mrs. Rhoads's face turned a ghastly gray as she opened it. The letter fell from her hands, and she hid her face in them for a moment.

Jean, who was watching her, rose hastily. "I fear you have had bad news, Mrs. Rhoads?" she said.

The older woman looked at her vacantly. No one had spoken kindly to her for two months. No one had spoken to her at all when it could be avoided. Something in Jean's eyes melted the icy reserve she had been cultivating all those dreary weeks. She picked up the letter and handed it to her. The gentlemen to whom she had applied declined positively, and in quite an unnecessarily curt manner, to have anything to do with the case.

"They was my last chance," said Mrs. Rhoads, the tears flowing freely down her weatherbeaten face. Several persons were watching the two women from the doorway, and commenting curiously on them.

"Come," said Jean. "Come right up to my room, and we can talk there." She put her arm about the other woman's shoulders and led her away, past Mr. Barnes, and up the narrow stairs.

"There!" he said discontentedly. "Miss Vallery didn't half eat her breakfas'. I hadn't never ought to a took that Rhoads woman in."

Jean seated her guest in the best chair her room afforded, and said gently, "Now tell me all about it."

"You heard what he called me?" said Mrs. Rhoads fearfully.

"Oh, yes," said Jean lightly. "Never mind that. Tell me about your trouble, and what you meant by saying those men were your last chance."

"I don't like for to trouble you, Miss. Seems 's if the Lord forgot His servants sometimes. I've done all I know how, and if there is such a thing as prayin' without ceasing, I've done it the last two months. An' now my boy's like to be hung without no one to say a word for him. You see, I went first to the few men we've known here, that might a been willing to help; Squire Horney said he was too old, and Joe Brown, he said he didn't feel like he'd had experience enough to take such a case; then I went to a man named Shaw an' a lot more, but they all of 'em wanted more money than I could raise, or had been hired by the other side. I tried to get a morgidge, but that's slow work, so then I got desprite an' I

offered the hull place to these men if they'd defend him. I don't know nobody else to go to. It ain't a murder, Miss. I know it's against scripture for to take life, but a man's got to look after his own. If my Tom *is* a murderer, them other men ain't no better, besides being thieves. But 'pears like it's all one way here, an' a poor man can't get justice, leastways when he's got into trouble with them that's got the money."

"How did he come to do it?" asked Jean. The incoherent story touched her. It was quite different from that told by *The Clarion*.

"He was drove to it, that's how! an' him as peaceable a boy as you ever seen. We've had hard times, him an' me, but this is the hardest."

"Tell me," said Jean. "Begin at the very beginning."

"Mr. Rhoads an' me come West when the children was little," she began. "We went to Californy; my little boy's buried there. We didn't have no luck, and we come back to Utah, but it was too lonesome, an' too far from anybody to do anything for you. My little girl died of diptheria, and no doctor within fifty mile. Then we went to Colorado, an' the hoppers eat us out three seasons runnin'. Mr. Rhoads was always kind a peaked, and he couldn't stand adversity. He took the mountain fever an' died there. There was only Tom an' me left. Tom, he farmed, an' I helped him part of the time, and part of the time I went out canvassin'."

"Canvassing?" repeated Jean vaguely.

"Yes, Miss; I was an agent, you know. Sometimes it was for books, and sometimes it was for wringers. I mostly found the wringers paid best. Then I had a self-wringin' mop that I did reel well with. I've been pretty nigh all over this country west of the Mizzoury. When the crops had been good I'd get a good many orders, but crops is most generally bad. Or if the crops isn't bad the prices is. It comes to the same thing."

"But how did you come to move here?" asked Jean.

"Oh, yes; I forgot to tell you there was a mortgidge. There is most generally, an' Tom an' me didn't seem able to raise it nohow. When we found we was goin' to lose the place we up an' sold for a little more'n the mortgidge, and then we come here."

"Was that long ago?" asked Jean.

"Only a matter of two year. You don't get much acquainted in that time when your neighbors is fifteen or twenty mile away. Still, we had been doin' right well. The range was good, an' Tom had a nice little bunch of cattle; the ranch lays close to water, an' Tom's corn was mighty fine. He allowed he'd have as much as sixty bushel to the acre this fall. Of course it was lonesome, but there's always something, an' lonesomeness ain't nigh so tryin' as a mortgidge. Everything was goin' all right enough till the rustlers come."

"What's a rustler?" asked Jean curiously.

"A rustler?" Mrs. Rhoads looked up in surprise, that any one should be ignorant of the nature of a creature so well known to the ranchmen of the Western States. "Why, a rustler's a man that's hired by the big cattlemen, men that's got thousands of head of cattle, for to keep settlers off the range. You see when the country gets settled up it takes away their pasture. Sometimes they keep 'em off one way, an' sometimes another. Sometimes they bring in a big herd of steers an' eat up all the grass, an' sometimes, an' not infrequent either, they round up all the little bunches of cattle an' drive 'em off. Then, again, they'll throw things into the wells, an' cut the fences. Oh, they can think of all kind of meanness. I s'pose I hadn't ought for to blame them for doing what they're hired to, but when I think of the men that hires 'em, it dooes seem like the wicked spread like green bay trees for an awful long time without bein' cut down."

"How did they molest your son?" asked Jean.

"Every way. They began by grazing round us till there wasn't no grass left for Tom's cattle, to speak of. Then they left a warning on the door; it was stuck on with a knife." She fumbled in her pocket and drew forth a shabby purse, so worn and flat it made Jean's heart ache. She took from it a scrap of paper containing these words, printed in irregular characters: —

> **No Kattl Theves wanted. This Rang is OUrn.**
> **Move awn an save TrubBle.**

"They left this one night last June. That's one way they

have; when they want to get rid of a man they accuse him of stealin' their cattle. Well, we couldn't move. Tom hadn't proved up, an' we hadn't nowhere to go. I didn't believe they'd do anything worse than they had done. I've always been a believer, an' it seemed to me like there was a God in Israel. Tom, he said that wouldn't do us no good s' long as there wasn't no law for poor folks in this State. Then one night they come an' cut the fences, an' the end of that week they come up with the herd. The steers eat or trampled every blade of corn. In the morning, — they brought the herd up at night,— in the morning two of 'em come up toward the house. One man begun throwin' things into the well. I was mightily afraid Tom would shoot, for it's hard to be angry an' sin not, so I leaned out of the window an' called to 'em to quit or they'd git into trouble. The man used an ugly cuss word at me, an' before I knew what he was up to, Tom fired. I ran right out when I seen the man fall, but he was dead. The other man seemed kind of decent; he didn't say nothing till I began to cry, thinking of Tom, then he spoke quick like; 'Stow that,' he says; 'you hain't got time for no waterworks now. The crowd'll be tendin' to a lynchin' mighty soon, 'less he can get off.' Just then I seen two of the rustlers comin' toward us. They'd heard the shot. 'For the love of heaven,' I says, 'an' the mother that's prayin' for you somewhere, take our horse and ride fer Lone Tree an' get word to the sheriff. You can keep the horse, but help me save my boy an' I'll bless' — but he interrupted me. 'There,' he says, 'cut an' run 'fore they git here. Where's the horse?' Seems like it takes a long time to tell it, but it didn't take but a mighty few minutes to live it all. Tom had been kind a stunned like when he seen what he'd done, or he'd never a let me go out. When I run back in he was trying to fasten the doors and barricade the windows somehow. We fastened 'em as good as we could, an' he stood at one of 'em with the rifle, and I was at the window in the leanto — there wasn't but one room and the shed kitchen — with the shotgun. I couldn't never a had the courage to fire, but Tom, he said they wouldn't be so likely to come close if they seen the gun stickin' out.

"They didn't do nothing for awhile but ride round the house to make sure we couldn't get away, excepting they took off the

body of the man that was killed. Tom said they was waiting to rest their horses, because when they got through with him they'd want to hit the trail right lively. There was a little cottonwood down in the arroya back of the house; they took a rope an' went down there. Seems like they didn't notice the other man being gone. Then they lay down an' rested a spell, two of them keepin' watch. About the middle of the afternoon they took the wagon-bed off the wheels an' hid behind it, an' come up close to the house an' called to Tom to come out. He just shoved the rifle a little further through the window. Then they began shooting in at the windows and swearing just awful." She wrung her gaunt, knotted brown hands at the memory, but displayed no emotion otherwise.

"I should have thought," said Jean, "they would have tried to set fire to the cabin."

"They would have gladly, Miss," answered Mrs. Rhoads with unconscious irony, "but you see it's a sod house. Well, all afternoon they kept that up. One of them nearly shot me, firing through the window that way, an' then Tom shot him through the right arm. He could have killed him easy, but Tom ain't no murderer. Toward dusk they rigged up the wagon tongue for a kind of battering ram. I thought I heard a call somewhere off on the range, but Tom thought I was mistaken. They were just making a rush at the door, when I heard it again, and a couple of quick shots. That stopped 'em. It was the sheriff. If he'd a been ten minutes later it wouldn't a been any use."

"What became of the man you gave the horse to?" asked Jean, who had not struggled over a thesis on "Evidence" for nothing.

"I wish I knew," sighed Mrs. Rhoads. "You don't know how I feel to that man. He wasn't just like what you'd expect a ministering angel to be, but that's what he was to me. I hain't never seen him since. Most always seems like, when I can't bear it no longer, the Lord raises up somebody to restore my soul, just like He did then. But oh, Miss, the trial comes off in ten days, an' there ain't nobody'll defend him!"

"You don't mean to say they call that murder out here?" demanded Jean incredulously.

"Yes, Miss," said the little woman patiently. "There's some of the settlers might feel like Tom didn't do wrong, but they don't dare say anything, an' all the other folks are against us. *The Clarion* says it was 'A cold-blooded and atrocious murder, committed without provocation or any action which could justify it.' The paper over to Lexington said, 'The entire State should demand the execution of this man who has thus attacked the peaceful guardians of one of our main industries.' I went clear to Aberdeen to get a lawyer for Tom, an' the papers there said dreadful unkind things about me, — of course I know I'm poor an' homely an' old, — an' then it said it spoke well for the moril sense of the legal fraternity that I hadn't been able to get any one to look after my case." She had evidently gotten the cruel words by heart.

"And there is absolutely no one?" Jean asked. "You know the court will have to appoint some one to defend him." She was hesitating in her own mind over a plan. Its audacity fairly took her breath. She had been sent West to take a much-needed rest after the study and overwork incident to her admission to the bar in her own State. Although she had not intended doing anything for some time yet, she felt instinctively that her first client was before her, her first case about to begin.

"The court!" Mrs. Rhoads almost sniffed. "The court may go through the motions, Miss, but he'll get no real defense in this county."

"That's as may be," said Jean. "Mrs. Rhoads, I'll take this case."

"But you're a woman," said Mrs. Rhoads blankly.

Jean laughed. "Yes," she said, "I'm a woman, but I'm a lawyer, too."

Jean Vallery's first case absorbed her entire attention. She complied with the necessary formalities at once, and set about posting herself in many minor particulars ordinarily left by the chief counsel to assistants. She inserted advertisements in all the principal papers of the State in the hope of finding the missing rustler. At one time it seemed to her that it would be impossible to secure a jury, so general was the prejudice against her client. And yet, having read many of the State newspapers, she

could not divest herself of the idea that the sentiment was largely manufactured. There was a similarity not to be explained on any other hypothesis.

It was a campaign year, and the cattle men, whose interests were endangered by actual settlers, were depicted as the benefactors of the State, men whose money had made it, and whose interests must be protected at all hazards. Several gentlemen, candidates for office, lost no opportunity to inflame the public mind against Tom Rhoads, and called on "the good people of Cheyenne" to "prove themselves a law-abiding community by avenging the murder of the unfortunate cattle herders."

When the case was called the courthouse was packed. Jean knew something of nearly every talesman brought into court, and sat imperturbably challenging "for cause," showing the connection of this would-be juror and that with the cattle men who were paying the lawyers, who were much in evidence as consulting counsel for the prosecuting attorney. She used her peremptory challenges very sparingly, and long before a jury was secured the gentlemen who had been disposed to amuse themselves with quips at the expense of "their learned sister-in-law" had grown almost deferential in their manner.

The attention of those present was divided pretty evenly between the prisoner and his counsel. Jean sat by herself, a little in front of Tom and his mother, her papers on a table before her. Mrs. Rhoads's hand rested on Tom's arm, and her patient, wistful face was turned pleadingly to the jury. The prisoner was a handsome young man, under thirty years of age, quiet and contained in his manner, and dignified in spite of his shabby garments. He had lost many coats of tan during his long confinement, and in contrast with his jet-black hair his face looked almost pallid. Jean did not look at or speak to him until at the close of the charge. When the usual question was asked, "Guilty or not guilty?" he took a long breath and, looking full in the judge's eyes, answered, "Not guilty."

The trial proceeded in the usual way. The witnesses for the prosecution had been carefully drilled, and did not deviate a hair's breadth in their story. They swore they had no evil intent toward the prisoner; they were driving their herd to a new pasture; two

of their number went to a ranch for water; one of them was shot down. The cross-examination failed to materially shake their testimony. None of them knew of any warning left at the ranch in question; none of them had cut any wire fences; none of them saw anything unusual in driving the herd by night. There was no intention of violence in their proceedings before the arrival of the sheriff; they were merely guarding the prisoner until his arrival. This claim brought out the question from Jean, "Who notified the sheriff of this shooting?"

For a moment the rustler was nonplussed, then he answered with the utmost *sang-froid*, "One of our men; he was goin' East, an' it was in his way."

"He went at the request of your party?" asked Jean.

"Sure thing," said the man impudently.

When the prosecution closed, the general impression seemed to be that the county had a very strong case. In opening the defense Jean did not make any very extended statement. She stated the facts she expected to prove by her witnesses, and then called for John Burns. There was something of a sensation when he took the stand, for in him the prosecution recognized the missing "rustler," on whose absence they had counted quite certainly. After various preliminary questions, Jean said, holding up a buck-horn-handled hunting knife, "Witness, do you recognize this knife?"

"Yes, Miss," he answered.

"When did you see it last?"

"I disremember the exact date, Miss, but last June, the fore part of the month sometime."

"Is it your knife, and if so did you lose it?"

"It's my knife all right, Miss, but I didn't lose it exactly. I left it fer a feller to remember me by."

"Did you leave anything else with it?"

"Ye'h; I left a scrap of paper."

"Is this it?"

"I reckon so. The last time I seen it, my knife was pinnin' it to the door of him as is the prisoner."

"Did you put them there?"

"Yes, Miss. I didn't do the writin', not bein' no scholard.

Our Captin done that, but I put it up while the other fellers was cuttin' the fence."

"Tell what you know about this case, briefly," said Jean.

"Well, Miss, 'tain't to say a heap, an' yet it's a right smart chance too much. After we put up the notise an' cut the wires we went back to the herd and waited fer to see what they'd do. We gin 'em four days, an' then we moved up with the herd. Them steers didn't wait for no invitation when they seen the corn. Long about sun-up me an' the Captin went up toward the house. He began to throw things inter the well. A woman up to the house sung out to quit or there'd be trouble. Well, there was trouble. He answered her right sassy, an' a minit later he was dead with his boots on. It was a mighty purty shot. He never knew what struck him."

"What happened next?"

"The woman come out fer to see if he was dead. I knew as she hadn't done the shootin' herself, an' not wanting to finish my airthly career so almighty suddint, I didn't go fer to make her no trouble. She said they'd give up to the sheriff, and seemed mightily broke up."

"What did she ask you to do?"

"Well, when she seen there wasn't no chance of gettin' him off, she asked me reel urgent like if I wouldn't go fer the sheriff myself; I didn't have no very pressin' engagement, an' I thought there might be some more shootin' if I was unaccomodatin', so I went."

"What inducement did the lady offer you?" asked the prosecuting attorney.

"The unusual pleasure of the sense of havin' done my duty," answered the rustler with a sweeping bow. "I ain't above herdin' cattle, but I ain't jinin' in no murderin' necktie parties."

"How about the murder of your captain at your side?" asked the lawyer.

"Wa'ell, ye see, pardner," drawled the witness, "I'm from Texas; down there, when a feller don't do as he's axed by a lady, we don't think shootin's any too good fer him."

By putting Mrs. Rhoads on the stand Jean proved the receipt of the warning and the cutting of the fences; also that Burns went

for the sheriff before the arrival of the rest of the rustlers. The jurymen handed the warning from one to the other, examining it curiously. Mrs. Rhoads was not entirely unknown, and her simple story told with the audience; Jean wished that she felt equally sure of the jury. When she rose to make her defense there was instant silence. She was facing the judge and jury, and did not see two gentlemen who made their way into the crowded room and remained standing near the door. She was a beautiful woman, with a clear, ringing voice, which she knew how to control perfectly. She was well gowned, confident that no matter how the case might go, she had right on her side, and, — it was her first case. She began her plea simply, telling the story of the struggle of this woman and her son for a livelihood. She spoke of their hardships, the weary years of wandering, the faith in a new State that made them cast in their lot with her, believing in her protection to even the poorest of her citizens. Then, when the good times which had been so long coming seemed at last near at hand, came this infamous notice to leave the little home, and, relinquishing the work of years, go forth once more penniless. The destruction of the fences, the ruin wrought by the herd, the insolent vandalism of the leader of the rustlers, the attempted lynching, prevented by the arrival of the sheriff sent for by the man accused of murder, all this was depicted in a masterly fashion that fairly carried the people away for the time being. Jean forgot herself, the crowd about her, the slurs of the townspeople, the innuendos of the newspapers, the prejudice against her client, the grimy building, the ugly town, the coming election; she forgot everything except the judge and jury, and the strained, tearless face of the little woman sitting back of her. Women sniffed audibly, and men sat with open mouths. The judge leaned forward, and the jury, knowing already the verdict that was to be brought in, regarded her uneasily. The older of the two men by the door watched her proudly. The face of the younger was beaming when she sat down.

"It's a clear case," he said softly.

"Yes," answered Judge Vallery. "It's a clear case, Henry, but she's lost it."

The prosecution went over the old ground, and closed an im-

passioned appeal to the jury with a demand for the observance of the old law, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The jury filed out, and there was a little hum of conversation in the courtroom. Some time passed. It grew dusk, yet but few persons quitted the room. The clerk of the court tiptoed out and returned with a smoky kerosene lamp which he placed on the judge's desk. It burned feebly, seeming rather to increase the darkness by contrast. The jury remained longer than the judge anticipated. He had certainly made clear the verdict he expected in his charge. His forehead was gathering an ominous expression when the sheriff announced that the jury was agreed. Jean's face flushed and then grew pale; she knew the inevitable result, and braced herself to meet it, but as she turned to Mrs. Rhoads and saw the look of perfect confidence with which the frail little creature regarded her, a lump came into her throat.

She had only time to whisper, as the jurors filed in amidst a general buzz of excitement, "Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Rhoads; I know this jury has been tampered with. We shall have to move for a new trial."

The jurors answered to their names, and the foreman handed the verdict to the judge. The wrinkles left his forehead as he read it, but as he looked up and caught Jean's indignant gaze, he colored hotly, and returned the slip of paper to the foreman. He read it, — "Guilty, as charged," and almost before he had seated himself Jean had moved for a new trial. There was no outbreak of applause in the courtroom, and Tom received the verdict with composure. But Mrs. Rhoads could bear the strain no longer; with a half-suppressed cry she lost consciousness. The sheriff was leading Tom away. Jean stooped and gathered the little woman up in her strong young arms, and stood facing them all. "She is a widow," she said in her vibrant voice, "and he is her only son." The crowd made way for her respectfully.

. . . . . .

When it was learned that the attorney for the defense in the case of the State *vs.* Rhoads was the daughter of the celebrated Judge Vallery, the press of that and adjoining States wrote her up, interviewed her, advertised her ability far and wide, and she had many offers of assistance in the new trial which was set for

an early date. She declined them all graciously. Much to the public surprise, she managed to have the trial postponed for some time. Her father was somewhat annoyed at her failure to push the case, and wrote her toward the end of the winter: "If you go to trial now, with all this sentiment stirred up over you and Mrs. Rhoads, even with the sympathy against the son, you will be able to get a light sentence. If the cattle men have the power you believe, you can never clear him entirely. Don't have too many of 'the law's delays.'"

Jean only smiled when she read this letter, and wrote back: "My client is going to be set free without ever seeing the inside of the penitentiary. There is absolutely no chance with a jury, for it will be impossible to impanel one that cannot be bought up. These people are poor; many of them owe money to these rich men now. Neither is it any use to appeal to the Governor; he has senatorial aspirations, and would not offend the powers that be. This isn't a contract, but time is its very essence, nevertheless. I have secured another stay of proceedings, and shall go to trial just as soon as the legislature adjourns. *By that time Cheyenne County, as it is now, will have ceased to exist.*"

Judge Vallery read this letter a second time carefully. "By Jove," he said, "what a head that girl's got! Technicalities are to blame for most of the injustice in this country. It's a pity if they can't be used on the side of justice once in awhile!"

Among the laws enacted by the legislature of the State during that session, not the least important was the division of Cheyenne County into half a dozen new ones. It was upon this fact that Jean now relied. The second trial, which came off in May, was held in one of these divisions, the Rhoads homestead being situated within the boundaries of the new Flag County.

Jean expected nothing different and appealed the case, securing in addition to filing her brief an oral hearing. The case was vital to her, although she did not in the least realize that it was destined to give her a national reputation. She thought only of the little woman in rusty black to whom it meant life or death, and this unselfish aim, making itself felt through her impassioned appeal, disarmed prejudice and secured the close attention of the judges.

Realizing that it was impossible to get justice in the spirit of the law, Jean appealed only to the letter, citing from her brief certain undeniable facts that sent a bombshell into the camp of the enemy.

"*My client*," she said, "*is entitled to a jury drawn from the county in which the alleged crime was committed. That county in its entirety is a thing of the past. The newly enacted law affords no means by which a jury can now be secured from that territory, no saving clause having been inserted in the division bill providing for a contingency of this nature.* Therefore the prisoner must be set free." She concluded with the well-remembered words of Lear: "Shall we take his life without a form of justice?"

Two days later the Supreme Court handed down its decision. Mrs. Rhoads alone, desolate and despairing, waiting in the barren little hotel where she had met Jean, hardly understood the purport of the telegram Mr. Barnes placed in her hands: —

"Lower court reversed. Your son is free."

She repeated the words mechanically. Then their meaning flashed across her bewildered brain, and she dropped on her knees sobbing out the old words that have brought comfort to so many hearts: "He watching over Israel slumbers not nor sleeps."

The Diary of a White Kaffir.*

BY JAMES O. FAGAN.

ITH a tent wagon drawn by a dozen oxen, urged by a black driver armed with a lash forty feet long, and guided by a black "fore-looper," an Afrikander hunter was leisurely making his way along the borders of Zwaziland, in the summer of 1879. Encamped one fine evening on the border of Lake Crissey, in the district of New Scotland, the oxen were secured for the night, the fire was burning brightly, and the hides of the blesboks and zebra shot during the day were spread out upon the grass.

Pulling from the hot ashes several steaks cut from the meat of the slaughtered game, and washing down this plain but appetizing fare with steaming, fragrant coffee, the hunter and his companions stretched themselves upon the ground to enjoy an after-supper smoke. A few whiffs of the strong Kaffir tobacco were quite enough for even a seasoned smoker, inhaled as it was from a peculiarly primitive water-pipe, of ingenious native construction. A tunnel was made by the black ox-driver in the clayey soil,

* This is one of two stories that won the $500 prize in THE BLACK CAT prize story competition ending March 31, 1898.

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some two inches deep and ten or twelve feet long, stopped at one end by a huge pipe bowl, and the tunnel being filled with water. At the end farthest from the bowl several branch tunnels were constructed, with small holes in the ground for mouth-pieces.

As the weary hunters reclined upon the sod, pulling at this rude nargileh, the barking of the dogs gave warning of the approach of strangers, and through the deepening dusk the figures of two tall, armed Kaffirs were seen, coming toward the wagon. The chief of the hunting party slowly arose and stretched himself, while the strange Kaffirs held their spears aloft and greeted him with the salutation:

"Inkos, inkosi umkulu; inkosi mareng!" implying that the white man was a chief and a great one, and that they acknowledged his rank.

Bidding the visitors sit by the fire, the hunter passed them a snuff-box, carried for just such occasions. His keen and comprehensive glance took in at once all the details of their simple dress and equipment, and he recognized the shield and headdress of the famous Tiger regiment — the Zwazi King's own body-guard. The black warriors were well fed with steaks from the coals, while the hunter patiently waited for them to speak. At length one of the Kaffirs delivered this message:

"We come from the King, who lives in the great Kraal over among the hills where the hot springs boil and bubble. One day the scouts reported that a white man was hunting the zebra and shooting the sea-cow by the shores of the great lakes where the black men come for their willows and their salt. And the King said, 'Tell the white hunter to come to the Kraal of the Zwazi. I will treat him well. He shall come and go in peace. Let him come empty-handed, so that he may take away many presents, and in this way he shall know that my heart is good, and that my country is great.' Such is the King's message, and we are here to be your guides."

Understanding and speaking their language fluently, the sportsman readily understood that the invitation was genuine, and did not hesitate to trust himself within the royal Kraal of the ferocious Amazwazi ruler, and, under the skilful guidance of the two

warriors, reached the King's headquarters within three days, and encamped just outside the Kraal.

The following morning the Afrikander was summoned to the presence of the Kaffir potentate, whom he found seated on a low bench outside his principal hut. Two of his chiefs were with him. After shaking hands with the white man and thanking him for the honor of his visit, he said:

"I have sent for the white hunter because I wish him to do a service. Long ago a man came to my country who was just like a Kaffir, but he was white. He was a doctor, and cured many of their sickness. I gave him wives and cattle, and made him a chief over many. He proved to be a great warrior, and taught the Kaffirs many things. We called the man 'Ibomvu,' on account of his red eyes. He won battles and always came home with much cattle and ivory. More than that — he could bring rain and sunshine at will.

"After a while, he rebelled and stole girls from a brother chief. I then said to him, 'You must die; choose now whichever you will — the spear, the poison, or the Roller.' The man laughed at my messenger, and said 'Let it be the Roller.' At the birth of the present moon he died. In the presence of tens of thousands of my people he ran well and bravely, but in the end the avenging rock overtook him, and nothing was left of the white Kaffir but a stain on the causeway.

"And now we are afraid of his gods and his sorcery; we are afraid of his weapons and his bottles, and so we pray the good white hunter to remove these things from our midst, that the blight may not wither our cornfields, nor the plague bring desolation to our homes."

The hunter, well acquainted with the peculiarities of African character, well knowing that no good would come of a refusal, and risking whatever harm might result from compliance, readily consented to remove the belongings of the "White Kaffir," while vaguely wondering who the victim of the tragedy so darkly hinted at could have been, and the King, on his part, promised to spare and protect the wives and children of the late object of his vengeance.

Rewarded for his good offices by the present of a yoke of beau-

tiful oxen and provided with a bright young Kaffir as a servant and guide, the white man resumed his hunting trip, taking with him the arms, the simple chemical paraphernalia and the few books and papers that had aroused the superstitious fears of the Kaffir King.

An inventory of the effects of "Ibomvu, the Red-eyed," however, disclosed nothing of unusual interest, with the exception of a note-book, or diary, and the more that that was studied by the hunter, in his moments of leisure by the flickering campfire or in the shady retreat from the noonday glare, the more absorbing it became. Some of the entries in this curious journal were in Portuguese, some in Dutch and some in English, and the later portions were liberally interspersed with Kaffir words. To the surprise and gratification of the discoverer, the entries were carried along to the day of the writer's death. The more the book was studied the more apparent it became that its owner had been a most interesting man, both physically and intellectually, and the tale unfolded was a most extraordinary one — perhaps without a parallel.

When his trip was over and opportunity came for a careful digest and translation of the strange diary, the Afrikander hunter culled from its pages and arranged in chronological order the most significant portions of the story of a remarkable career, narrated, as nearly as translation would permit, in the man's own words:

1840. — Brazil is a great country, if you count the acres, and Bahia is a great city, if you count the heads — principally black ones. The face of the city, from the sea, is the face of a huge rock. Some of the houses are up among the clouds and some of them are down at the water's edge. One having the courage to climb through and over the upper town cannot help crossing the Street of the Little Strangers, where the most conspicuous building in sight is a convent — large, square and white, with mere slits or crevices for windows, like a fortress. The entrance to this institution is through an archway, high and deep, and at the end of the passage are great oaken doors, bound with iron. To the right of these great doors, two or three granite steps lead up to a niche in the wall, in front of which is a sliding screen. At a certain hour every morning this screen is withdrawn, revealing a low table, on

which stands a basket, attached to a rope dangling from above. A muffled and hooded figure comes stealthily and quietly along the passage. It is a woman, evidently young, consequently pretty. She carries a bundle. Kneeling before the alcove, she awaits the withdrawal of the screen. Unwrapping an infant, she places it tenderly in the basket, throws in jewels and money and raiment, and last of all a card, with a number and a date. Remaining only long enough to weep a little and pray a little, she turns quietly away.

So much and no more do I know about my origin and antecedents. Around my neck hangs a silver token with the inscription:

BAHIA.
NOSSA SENHORA DA MISERICORDIA.
No. 77.

. . . . . .

1865.—I have arrived at the thinking age, and my thoughts are as poison to my mind — they drive me nearly crazy at times. I am like a specimen of some extinct and curious fauna, or an archaic palimpsest, at which the world wonders, and places in a museum. Since I left the convent I have been repeatedly examined, scraped, scrutinized and catalogued, until I am sick of my miserable personality.

I have a mirror, and I hold it before me. My hair is white, short, curly and silky, and grows in tufts. My nose is flat, my cheekbones high, and my skin a sickly cream color. Some people take me for a leper, and half the world fears me. The pupils of my eyes are red, and where they should be white they are pink.

Perhaps it is that I may better realize these horrible facts that I have been carefully brought up, educated, and persistently taught that I possess an immortal soul! Was not the good priest well aware of my peculiar physiognomy when he informed me that my mother was one of the most beautiful women in the city, and my father — a religious secret?

. . . . . .

Today I had a visitor, a noted doctor and a man of science, named Peixotto. After a rambling talk on science in general and ethnology in particular, he intimated that he was seeking a specimen of an albino — purely in the interests of science, of course! Would I sell my body at death for 500 milreis? Or, better still, would I accept 1,000, and agree not to postpone my departure from this life beyond five years?

Would I? Well, of course I would! Do I not hate the world, and every white face in it?

The good Father has vouched for my honesty, the wise doctor has paid me the money, and published his bargain in the *Jornal da Bahia*, and I have shipped as cook on board an American vessel, bound for South Africa. I have also put a notice in the *Jornal* that I am off for a five years' cruise.

. . . . . .

1869. — Money flies in Africa, as elsewhere, and I am now poverty-stricken. They say there is gold in the interior. I will go and see.

A transport rider has hired me to drag his cattle over the hills and through the mire. I don't like it. I shall run away.

The white rascals pursued and caught me, after a while, tied me to a wagon wheel, and gave me twenty lashes from my own whip. Then they tied my hands behind my back, buried me in a hole in the sand, up to my waist, smeared my face and neck with molasses, and left me to the flies!

Heaven must have determined not to cheat the science-loving doctor of his bargain. I find that I was released by friendly Kaffirs and taken to a Kraal. I like these great, honest black men, and shall continue to live with them, if they will have me.

. . . . . .

1870. — Among the white people I was either a cur or a curio! Here I am, among the Amazwazi, a chief and a soothsayer! The King delights to honor me. I cure his aches and pains, and tell his people strange things — to them — as we crouch by the fires in the long, cool evenings. I am now a Kaffir; I have no desire to speak any other language or see any other faces. I have a Kraal

of my own, containing seven huts already, one for each of my wives, and when I return from the caves of the Maccatees I shall have several more.

I sat with the King and his head men today. It was decided to grant the request of the English government, and send 10,000 Zwazi warriors to help the redcoats storm the stronghold of Sekukuni, the Maccatees robber.

. . . . . .

1879. — The expedition has returned — that is, about half of it. Five thousand copper-skinned soldiers, brave and proud, have left their bones to whiten among the rocks where the sneaking Maccatees were brought to bay and destroyed. We set out in three columns, and I was at the head of the finest. After six days we arrived at the mountain. The redcoats were there, waiting. The stronghold we had to storm was a range of hills, full of caves and holes. Half-way up, on a level plateau, was the town. In the morning, before dawn, came the word to advance. In a short time the town was in flames, the cattle were captured, and the robbers had all retreated to the caves.

Now to get them out. The redcoats shelled the caves, and then the Zwazis stormed them. Half of my brave followers were shot down, to begin with, but the other half got in. Then it was Kaffir against Kaffir, and no quarter was asked or given. As fast as the men in the caves were overcome, they were thrown out and down over the steep rocks, and the women and children followed, none being spared but the young girls, who were reserved for the King's orders. The carnage continued until noon, when the redcoats employed dynamite, and applied the torch. In this way they drove out and captured the arch-robber, but the caves still contained hundreds of refugees.

For three days after the fight I patrolled the mountain with some of my men. We could still hear the dogs barking, women and children weeping and men cursing, far down in the caves which the redcoats had closed forever with their dynamite. Stabbing and throwing their enemies over the rocks for the vultures and the wolves is Kaffir warfare — the plan of burying them alive and leaving them is the Christian and more civilized way. You

can take your choice. For my own part, I am glad that I am a Kaffir by adoption, and was neither a white nor a black man by birth.

. . . . . .

On my return from the expedition, I claimed my share of the captives, which the great chief denied me. Thereupon I grew angry, made a raid, and took what belonged to me. Now I am to suffer in consequence. Yesterday I received a not unexpected visit. It was the executioner, with the basket of pipes. He spread the fatal robe on the ground before the entrance to my hut. My wives and children, becoming aware of his arrival, flocked in from all sides, surrounding him and screaming in his face. He took no notice of them, but sat down and awaited my coming.

I left my hut and seated myself before him. Three pipes lay upon the cowskin robe — one white, one black and one red. The white means the spear, the black the poison, and the red — the Roller! I thought a moment, selected the red pipe, lighted it and smoked. The grotesquely tattooed and horribly painted visitor remained silent throughout. When I had finished my smoke, he arose, handed me a reed, and departed. This morning at sunrise he brought me another reed. The day on which he fails to appear at sunrise with the reed will be my last. The ceremonies are simple, solemn and sure. Escape is impossible. To leave the Kraal is to be stabbed in the back.

I know all about the Roller — I have sent men there myself. About a mile from the King's Kraal is a kloof, or ravine, part natural, part artificial — a chute or groove in the side of the mountain. Far ages it has been used for its grim and deadly purpose. It is about half a mile long, ten feet deep and eight feet wide, with sloping sides. At the head of the run is a plateau, where the huge boulders are fashioned into shape and launched on their fearful errands. The inclination is such that they acquire a frightful velocity before they plunge into the river at the foot of the hill.

I have no doubt that when the shields rattle, and the shouts go up when the excutioner steps forward, touches me with the point

of his spear, and I spring from the platform, half the Zwazi nation will be on the heights around. The crowds can tell pretty nearly where you will be killed, by the start that is given you. A bold and fearless runner has a chance, with a good start, and then the excitement on the hills is intense. Then it becomes a race between the man and the Roller, the man rushing for his life toward the river, and the boulder, huge and remorseless, closing the gap between them by leaps and bounds, till the gap is not, and the man is nothing but a memory.

I shall be glad to settle my account with creation in that way. I shall rejoice to hear the pitiless thunder of the rock behind me, and to breathe defiance to the noise of the howling multitude. That is a death for a man to die! They told me I was one of creation's outcasts, one of her mistakes, one of her riddles. Some pointed at me with the finger of scorn, some shuddered, some laughed, — but all thanked God they were not as I! Nevertheless, I shall not die by my own hand to pay my creditor, nor in a mad-house, a hospital, or on the gallows, nor shall I fill a drunkard's or a felon's grave. Verily, those are for my betters!

No! I shall welcome my freedom, with every nerve and muscle in my naked body strained and palpitating to its utmost tension. One moment white-haired, white-skinned, with red eyes, a lion heart and the speed of the wind — and then, in the twinkling of an eye, nothing but a blot on the hillside! Well, let it come.

. . . . . .

And now for the end of the chapter and the book. The sun is already high in the heavens on this, the last day of a useless life, and the reed, the promise of life for a day, has not arrived. The women are weeping and wailing and the little children are in hiding, for fear of the terrible fate that awaits them, for the children of rebels are stoned.

All are in hiding but one, and she, the child of my heart, is clinging to my knees and will neither be comforted nor driven away. Seven bountiful summers have gladdened her heart and brightened her face, and her mother calls her Zula, because she is beautiful, while her father calls her Panzi, because she is good. Her little golden body sparkles and quivers in the sunshine. To

know what her complexion is like, you must watch the amber and gold of the dawn, as it emerges from the sea and is welcomed by a cloudless sky.

And now the mother, in her anguish, is crying, "Do not leave us!" and the little one at my knees is sobbing, "Do not go!"

O child of my heart, not until now has the iron entered my soul and taken from me my strength and my pride!

I sink on my knees in the dust and mingle my sobs with her whispers and her tears. And when I arise, I say to myself, Surely, the wonder and the glory of the universe is neither man nor his handiwork, but the beauty and the holiness in the heart of a child. Panzi, life of my life, would that I could now live, for your sake!

. . . . . .

But at noon the executioner with the horrible countenance will appear, trailing the fatal spear behind him. He will be silent, as before, but he knows that I understand, and must follow.

Now, where is the doctor with a mortgage on my body, and where the white millions who call me a leper and a freak?

The Statement of Jared Johnson.*

BY GERALDINE BONNER.

I AM going to write my side of the famous "Johnson Case."

It's a pretty hard thing to go over in cold blood, but I want the public to hear my version of the story. They know the case against me has been dismissed and they've read in the papers what I said, but it's been so mixed up and so misrepresented that I've decided to make my own statement — to write down as simply and as honestly as I can just how it was I came to be suspected.

My name is Jared Johnson and until I was arrested on the 23d of last December, I was the janitor of the Fremont Building, and had been so for two years past.

The Fremont, as people know now, since the trial made it famous, is an old building off Washington Square. It was one of those houses that still exist in that quarter of the city, which used to be the homes of the gentry and gradually got down in the world

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till they were first sliced off into flats, and then split up into offices.

The Fremont had been a fine, well built house in the beginning, and even when I came into it was in good repair. But it was old-fashioned, without elevators or electric lights, and the offices rented for low prices.

The top story had been used as a photograph gallery, and had long glass skylights in the ceiling. But that was before my time. Ever since I'd been janitor it had been leased by a society of ladies for a studio. One batch painted there all the morning and another all the afternoon. They had models who used to pose for them and who were forever clattering up and down stairs — mostly Italians and generally a pretty tough-looking lot.

This room was a good deal of a charge on me, for I had to keep it heated up to a tremendous temperature, because the models stood up to be painted in their skins as God made them. And, if they were dagoes, I couldn't let them take their deaths. One end of the room, under the corner skylight, was curtained off for them to use as a dressing room.

Below this were four floors of offices and lodgings, and in the basement I and my wife, Rosy, had our rooms. I have to be particular about describing all this, because I want those who read my statement to have everything clear in their minds.

Just about the middle of December there was a great frost, the worst cold snap I remember, and I came to New York from Ohio when I was twelve. On the morning of December 17th Rosy told me that the thermometer outside Miss Maitland, the typewriter's, window, had dropped to 3 above zero. It was mortal cold. I was kept busy building fires and seeing that the steam heat was on full pressure.

I was proud of the old Fremont for not a pipe in her burst or froze. And next door in the Octagon Building, a brand new skyscraper, twelve stories, and with all the modern improvements, the pipes on our side burst and froze so that the ice was clogged down the sides of them in a huge mass with icicles as long as your arm.

I noticed this on the morning of December 17th when I was rubbing off the skylights in the studio. I was standing on a

step-ladder when I looked up at the wall of the Octagon rising like a cliff, and just on the angle, a little above our roof, were the pipes with the ice wrapped round them like a winding sheet. I couldn't help laughing for they'd blown so about the Octagon and her "modern improvements."

Two days later the black frost broke and there was the biggest thaw that ever was seen. It got soft and warm like Spring, the streets began to swim with water, and all day long the boys were coming down from the offices complaining of the steam heat. I was on the rush all day, for to add to everything else it was Saturday, and Rosy and I have most of the building to ourselves that day and we do the cleaning.

But we didn't do as much as usual that Saturday, for, as I had to tell on the trial, and so must repeat it now, Rosy and I had fallen out. We'd been bickering for quite a while past and Saturday it seemed as if we couldn't meet on the stairs or hand each other a broom or a pail without snapping and nagging. I'm not blaming her, for I was as ugly as she, only my temper is not of that kind. It's the still, sulky sort, and it rises slowly but takes a long time to cool.

The trouble between us was this — Heaven forgive me for raking it all up after Rosy proved herself to be the truest wife a man ever had, but it's part of my statement, and has to go in — Rosy was jealous. She'd always been inclined that way, and when we were first married and everything she did seemed just about right, I tried never to bother or annoy her.

But after five years of marriage I wasn't quite so considerate, and though I swear before Heaven I never did aught that any man mightn't do without shame or blame, I wasn't so mindful of what Rosy liked or disliked. I know now that, without meaning it, I must have provoked her often. I suspect I did it to tease her a little, and I suspect I did it to prove to her that I was my own master and wasn't going to have any woman dictating to me.

It was one of the models up in the ladies' studio that Rosy was jealous about. Most of them being dagoes, as black as mulattoes, and only speaking their own talk, I had no words with them. But there was one of them, Alice Merrion, that was of Irish parentage but American born, and with her I struck up an ac-

quaintance, and we used to stop and pass the time of day when we met on the stairs or in the hall.

Rosy took a dislike to Alice Merrion right from the start. She said she couldn't bear her because she was a model. Nothing that you could say would make Rosy believe that a girl could be honest and earn her living that way.

As for Alice Merrion's looks — she couldn't understand why any one wanted to paint her picture. To tell the truth, I often thought this too, for Alice wasn't what I'd call a pretty girl. She had freckles, yellowish-green eyes and a big bush of red hair that stood out like flames round her head.

I liked the girl and I was sorry for her. She was one of the best I ever knew, honest as a die and straight as a string for all her being a model. She supported her mother, and if ever I was sure of anything in my life, I was sure of Alice Merrion's character. But I wasn't any more taken with her than a married man might be honestly taken with any decent girl.

On Saturday afternoon, the ladies going home early, I made it my business to clean up the studio and lock it till Monday morning. On Saturday, December 19th, the ladies left even earlier than usual, the day settling down dark and threatening rain, and about four I went up with my broom and pail.

I was mightily surprised when I opened the door to see Alice sitting huddled up, cowering over the stove. She was right under the middle skylight and the gray, wintery light fell in on her red hair that was loosely knotted up and looked like a fiery crown. From under her skirt her bare feet were thrust out on the stove ledge, and she had a shawl folded round her shoulders, with her bare arms, white as marble, coming out.

"Why, Alice," said I, "what's up? It's past four and here you are, not even dressed yet."

She looked up at me and I saw that her cheeks were pale and her eyes looked dull and heavy.

"I feel sick," she said, drawing her hand over her forehead, and pushing back her hair. "I've got something sure. A little while ago I was as hot as this stove, and now I'm freezing."

She crouched over it spreading out her hands. I touched one of them; it was like ice. As I stood looking at her I heard the

first drops of rain — big, heavy, slow drops — fall on the skylight.

"You've caught a bad cold," I said to her. "You want something to warm you up. Don't you think a cup of tea would do you good?"

Her face brightened directly.

"Oh, Mr. Johnson," she said, "do you think you could get me one? I didn't have a bite of lunch to-day. I felt so bad. And then I stood here for two hours and that's hard work, even when you're well. I think if I could get something hot I'd feel better."

She looked up at me with her big, yellowish eyes shining through the gray light, and if ever I was sorry for a woman it was for her. I wished that Rosy wasn't so down on her and I'd have taken her to our rooms and given her a good meal.

"Rest here easy," I said to her, "and I'll get you a bite that will brace you up. I won't be long," and I went out and down the stairs feeling angrier than ever with Rosy for her senseless prejudice.

I hoped and prayed that there might be no one in the kitchen and things went my way for once. Rosy was not there. So I made a little brew of tea, cut some bread and butter, put it on a tray and set off up the stairs.

And it was here that my luck deserted me. For, on the second landing, I met Miss Maitland going out.

"What's the matter?" says she, looking at the tray. "Any one sick?"

It didn't cross my mind not to tell the truth and I answered:

"The model, ma'am, on the top floor, has caught a chill and feels bad."

Miss Maitland laughed and went down the stairs and her testimony in court, if you remember, was pretty damaging for me.

On the fourth floor I ran into Mr. Raymond on the landing. Mr. Raymond is my favorite in the whole Fremont. He is a stenographer and rents all the back rooms on that floor, some of them for offices and the rest for his own lodgings.

"Hullo, Johnson," he says to me in his jolly way, "taking that up to me? Made a mistake this time. That's not my particular tipple."

I laughed, for we all knew that Mr. Raymond's tipple was a pretty strong one.

"No, sir," I said. "It's for Alice Merrion in the studio. She's taken with a chill. She's had nothing to eat since morning and I thought this would warm her up a little."

"Ah, poor girl!" he says, going on down the passage to his own rooms. Then over his shoulder he called: "If you want anything stronger — if she feels faint, or anything—just drop in on me and I'll give it to you."

And he went down the passage. Those two meetings were about as bad for me as they could be, as it turned out afterward.

I went into the studio and found Alice just as I had left her. She drank the tea and ate the bread with a relish and I began to get things ready for my cleaning. Now and then we spoke to each other, and betweenwhiles we could hear the rain drumming on the skylight. It grew dark and leaden, and, as I moved, I could see through the skylights the big wall of the Octagon, with the windows springing out in yellow squares as the gases were lit.

When Alice had finished, I knew she'd want to dress and go home, so I made an excuse to go. She watched me as I set the tea things back on the tray and then said suddenly:

"You're very good to me; let's shake hands."

I was surprised, but took her hand and shook it.

"You're a good girl," I said to her, "mind you remember that I'm always your friend."

"Thanks, Jared Johnson," said she quite solemnly, "I know that. Good-by."

I turned round and went, some way or other feeling sort of strange and awed. I shut the door behind me and as I was on the stairs I heard her lock it.

In the kitchen I found Rosy. The moment she saw the tray her face darkened, and she pulled up short in her work and eyed me with a sharp look. I was irritable myself, angry with her for her treatment of Alice Merrion, and when she looked at me that way, it made me blaze up. Without waiting for her to ask me, I told her who the tray was for and where I had been.

I don't think it's necessary for me to tell just what we said to each other, but we had a quarrel — a bitter one. Now that both

of us have felt what real misery is, we realize with shame what a pair of crazy fools we were.

But we thought of nothing then but our own anger. I don't remember all I said. I felt that black rage a man sometimes feels when a woman he loves and honors flings in his teeth low meannesses he never thought of doing. In the middle of it I got up and ran out of the room, banging the door. I went down to the cellar, and stayed there all night sleeping on a pile of gunny sacks in front of the furnace.

The next day Rosy and I were about as stiff to each other as we could be. We hardly spoke at all and ate our meals in a heavy silence. Monday morning broke with a blue sky and sunlight outside, but between us there was still cloudy weather.

I got up early, for I had to build fires in some of the offices, especially in the studio, which, by eight o'clock, was supposed to be warmed and ready for the first class. As I went up the third flight of stairs, Mr. Raymond came out on the landing.

"Hullo! Johnson," says he, "what the devil's the matter with this building? Is she settling?"

"The Fremont's as good as she ever was, sir," I answered. "What's the matter?"

"The ceiling's come down in my bathroom," says he. "Early this morning — whang! bang! — down she came. Come and see the scene of carnage."

I followed him into the bathroom, which opened off the end of the passage, and there, sure enough, the ceiling was down. I picked up a piece of the plaster and felt that it was wet.

"A leak," I said, "the rain's come in above."

"Oh, then," he says, suddenly, "that explains the crash of glass I heard Saturday evening. There was a tremendous smashing of glass from somewhere up there."

This startled me. I suppose I looked sort of alarmed, for Mr. Raymond said,

"I'll go up with you. Probably the skylight's broken."

We ran up the last flight and tried the studio door. It was locked, and when I tried my key I found that there was one already in the keyhole.

I don't know then just what I thought, but I know a deadly

feeling of fear took hold of my heart. Mr. Raymond must have seen it in my face.

"Break in the door," says he in a low voice, and, as he spoke, he put his shoulder to the panel and pressed. In a moment we had ripped off the old socket that held the lock and the door burst in.

There was a sudden sharp current of air, cold and wet, and the brown curtain over the models' dressing corner swelled out on the draught. A window was open somewhere and part of the floor was dark with rain stains.

We shut the door with the key still in the lock and ran to where the curtain fell back into its straight folds. Behind it we saw a sight that neither of us will ever forget.

Alice Merrion lay on her face on the floor, the skylight above her broken, and the fragments of glass scattered in every direction.

She was fully dressed, except for her shoes, one of which she held in her hand. Through the broken skylight the rain had beaten upon her till her clothes, the floor, her hair, were oozing moisture. The latter was wet with something else which dyed it a deeper red. The back of her skull was fractured and partly driven in. She was rigid in death, her eyes open, and an expression of strange, terrified surprise stamped upon her features.

That first glimpse impressed every detail of the room upon my mind. Her hat and jacket were hanging from a peg in the wall. On the shelf under the square of looking-glass lay some hair-pins and her purse. All about — on her dress, in her hair, on the floor — shone bits of the shivered skylight. The panes of glass were of a good size and were fitted into light, thin supports of iron. Just in the middle two of these were bowed downward.

We bent over her to see if there were any signs of life, but she was cold and stiff as a marble statue. The physicians afterward said that when we found her she had been dead about thirty-six hours. She had evidently been putting on her shoes when struck down by the terrific blow that killed her.

That is as truthful a description as I can write of the finding of Alice Merrion's body. I ought to know how to do it by this time. I've not only told it so often, but I've dreamed it night

after night till I wonder if I'm going to go on dreaming it forever.

The next day I was arrested on suspicion as the murderer and a week later was indicted by the Grand Jury. My trial followed in two months.

I never knew until I was in danger of losing my life on circumstantial evidence how important the most insignificant things can become when people are looking for incriminating actions and words. Foolish things I had said came up against me as black as night. The cup of tea I took the girl was as bad for me as if it had been a cup of poison. But worst of all was the quarrel I had with Rosy. It all had to come out, and the newspapers that were not on my side said it was as bad for me as if I'd been caught red-handed.

I could see as plain as anybody that the case against me was a strong one. It started on the theory that I was in love with Alice Merrion. Both Rosy and I acknowledged that we'd more than once quarrelled about her. On the afternoon of December 19th I had had a final interview with her. There were different opinions as to what this had been about. Some had it that she'd threatened to expose me to my wife, who was jealous already; others that she'd given me to understand she wouldn't have anything to do with me. Whatever she'd said, she'd scared or angered me till I'd crept up on her from the back and struck her dead with one — or some thought two — savage blows.

To turn aside suspicion I had then locked the door and left the key in it, had broken the skylight — the noise of which Mr. Raymond had heard at a few minutes after five — and, under cover of the dark, had dropped from the roof to the fire-escapes. When I got to the kitchen my nerves were naturally unstrung and I had quarrelled with my wife, left the room, and had not been seen again until the morning.

The one link in the chain which did not fit was how I had brought the tea tray down with me. The only way I could have done this was to have put it outside the door, and then, after escaping by the fire-ladders, crept back for it and come down again. This, people said, was a proof of my fiendish coolness and cunning.

The fact that the evidence pointed to no one else made it all the worse for me. There did not seem to be a human creature but myself who could be suspected. The girl had no enemies and no followers that anybody knew of. She had led a quiet and perfectly respectable life. That the object was not theft was proved by the fact that her purse, containing twenty dollars, was untouched. There was no doubt that somebody had murdered her, and the murder could be fastened on no one but me.

One of the questions over which there was great argument was what instrument or weapon had been used to deliver the blow. On the upper part of the occiput, just below the crown, the skin and flesh had been cleanly cut as though struck with something sharp-edged or pointed.

There were expert surgeons called up to examine the wounds and they each had their own ideas as to what the murderer had used. One thought a bayonet, or something shaped like a bayonet, such as a pickaxe or an ice-pick. Another said a hatchet or axe. And one — he was the most celebrated of the lot — said he thought that not one but two implements had been employed, a sharp one which cut the scalp, and a heavy one which fractured the skull.

It was this man who said that the murderer had evidently been in a state of frenzy, as the blow or blows must have been of terrific force to so crush the skull. His evidence started the theory that the girl had been killed by a maniac who had entered and come out by the skylight.

The first days of the trial were so terrible I hate to think of them. The whole world seemed against me. The reporters used to come and talk with me and then write me up as "a man with the face of an assassin" or describe me as "the human bloodhound."

Some of them were friendly fellows too—used to clap me on the back and say, "Brace up, old boy, they've not got enough evidence to convict you"; but when it came to believing in me, that was quite another story. I was Jared Johnson The Suspect, as they called me, a good case to make copy out of, and that was all.

There was one of them that I didn't take much notice of or stock in at first. He was the youngest-looking chap for his age I ever saw. When I first saw him I thought he was about eigh-

teen. He was a little, thin, smooth-faced, light-haired boy, and new to the business, as you could see by the quiet bashful sort of way he hung round when the others were there.

One day he got at me alone and began to talk to me, easy and natural, as man to man. He told me he was from Ohio, as I was, and that broke the ice right off. Then he said his name was John Paul Hayne, and he was twenty-six years old. He sat quite a while talking of places in the old state we both knew, and I got to feel as if I was a civilized Christian once more, not an Apache Indian that all the world was chasing. When he got up to go, he stood round for a minute in an uneasy sort of way, and then he suddenly says to me, looking me straight in the eye:

"Jared Johnson, you're not guilty of that murder."

He didn't say it as if he was asking a question, or as if he was trying to persuade himself — he just stated a fact. I looked back at him and I said as quietly as he:

"You're right. But what makes you think so?"

"Oh," says he, speaking in a queer sort of way he had with him, "I can see a church by daylight. I've seen a lot while I've been loafing round here."

The next time he came we had a long talk. He told me he'd viewed the premises and the body the morning the murder was discovered. He was sent by his paper, The Scoop. And since then he'd been there several times on his own account.

"And you know," says he, "I've come to a conclusion. The thing that killed Alice Merrion didn't *go* through the skylight, it *came* through it."

"What makes you think that?" I asked.

"The way the iron stanchions were bent. They say the weight of the man hanging to them and pulling himself up bowed them down. Now, I say that's a mistake. To bend those rods that way a man would have to be a giant — a second Sandow. It was the weight of something that struck them from above — a tremendous weight — that bent and almost broke them."

"What could strike down from there?" I asked. "There's nothing between the roof of the Fremont and Heaven."

"That's the trick," said he. "You tell me what could, and I'll tell you what killed Alice Merrion."

it seemed to me all idle talk, but I couldn't help saying:

"I don't see how you make that out. Alice was struck on the back of the head. If a thing fell on her it would have caught her on the top of her head. She must have been standing right under the skylight."

He leaned forward and put his fingers on my arm, his eyes shining like jewels.

"Johnson," says he, "you're an honest man, I've no doubt, but you've not got much sense. Don't you remember that she was putting on her shoes? Did you ever see a woman put on her shoes? She leans over so that her head's bent forward this way—" and he bent his head far down till the back of his neck was stretched out beyond his collar.

"I guess you and the doctor have got the same idea," said I. "There is nothing that could come down on her from above and strike her dead with one blow but a madman who had been creeping about on the roofs."

"I worked over that theory for some time," says he, "but I've come to the conclusion that there's nothing in it. Between the breaking of the glass and the falling of the blow she could have got to the door. No—she was surprised as she was putting on her shoes—surprised and killed in the same instant."

I thought of the expression of her face that morning when we found her dead and stiff, and I looked at John Paul Hayne and nodded without speaking.

After this I saw him every few days. He asked me lots of questions and I got to answering him pretty freely, for I saw that he didn't publish what I said, and I got a great liking for him. He was forever starting theories, but I didn't see that they came to anything.

It was just about this time that the second cold snap struck the city. It was precious cold in my cell and I thought of the old Fremont and Rosy's sitting room with a fire shining through the bars of the grate. Lord! but those times seemed a long way off!

Rosy came to see me with her ears tied up in a worsted scarf. She said it was not as cold as the first snap, but, none the less, the Octagon pipes had frozen and burst again. Some of the Octagon people had come over to the Fremont to ask for rooms.

They said the Octagon was a sham, run up by contract and badly built from the curbstone to the chimneys.

Because of these applications the owners of the Fremont were thinking of tearing out the inside of the studio and fitting it up for offices. But, so far, it stood just as it did the morning Alice Merrion's body was found there. The detectives working on the case wouldn't have it touched.

The cold spell was a short one. The back of the winter was broken and it gave way in three days with a big thaw. The sun beat down like Spring and everything ran water.

My trial was going on daily. The evidence for the defence was nearly all in. I was in a strange state of mind — sometimes I felt wild as if I was being smothered; then again I'd be dull and dead-like, not caring what happened.

People kept on saying "They can't convict you on the evidence they've got." But I didn't care much for that. Even if the jury disagreed I was ruined. I'd have to go back to the world and for the rest of my life be pointed out as the man who had brutally murdered a poor, sick, defenceless girl. I'd rather have died, only for Rosy.

It was the afternoon of the third warm day. I'll never forget that day if I live to be two hundred. The window of the cell was open and every now and then a little breath of soft air came in — air full of Spring.

I was alone, sick at heart and dead beat. I'd been in the court room since morning. They'd had Rosy on the stand, and the poor girl had got mixed up and made things between us look as bad as could be. Then, seeing what she had done, and being weak and frightened, she'd gone off into hysterics, and they could not get her into any sort of condition to go on. So the case had been called off until Monday and I'd seen Rosy taken out sobbing and half dead, and been brought back to my cell.

I was sitting on the edge of the bed when I heard the rattling of bolts and voices at the door, and in came Hayne. The light from the window fell full on his face and it shone as if there was a lamp lit inside it. The look of him brought me on to my feet as if I'd been yanked up by a derrick. I said something, I don't know what. Maybe I didn't speak at all, but I know I tried to.

Without saying a word he took off his hat and held it out to me. I looked at it stupidly. It was a brown derby, the top broken and split.

"Look at that, Johnson," he said, shaking it under my eyes — "look at it well. It's saved you. Do you understand me? It's saved your life."

I stared at him and tried to say something but my tongue wouldn't work.

He pushed me back on the bed and, holding the hat in front of me, began to talk quick with his breath catching in between like a man who's been running.

"My hat's been ruined in that studio of yours — the studio of the Fremont. Fortunately, Raymond and his assistant stenographer were there and saw the catastrophe. See," he said, thrusting his hand through the hole in the crown. "What a blow!"

"A blow!" I said. "Who struck it?"

"The same person who struck Alice Merrion."

We were silent for a second, staring at each other. I could hear my heart beating like a hammer. Then he began:

"I've been in the studio a good deal lately, studying the place. To-day I stopped there at about mid-day, to have another look at those bent rods we've so often spoken of. On the landing I met Raymond and his assistant, and they went in with me, as I wanted to explain to them my idea about the rods. I got on a chair under the broken skylight and they stood below, listening to my explanation. As I stood that way the sun beat down on my head almost as hot as summer and I could hear the dripping of the water from the icicles on the Octagon pipes.

"All of a sudden, without warning, I heard a sharp, snapping sound, there was a crashing noise, and something struck me on the head a stultifying blow. I shouted and struck up, and Raymond and the stenographer caught me as I fell, for I was stunned for a moment. When I pulled myself together I saw that the floor was covered with icicles and chunks of solid ice. Looking up we could see that the great bunch which had been hanging to the pipes had broken off, snapped by its own weight in the thaw."

I fell back on the bed, holding his hand, and stammering something — Heaven knows what.

"Brace up, old man," says he. "You can see daylight now all right. Raymond says that the icicles on the pipes in the last frost were triple that size and weight. *They* bent the iron rods and tore the skylight out. *They* murdered Alice Merrion. All you can say is that they killed her quickly. They must have fallen in two detachments, the vibration of the first break dislodging the second mass, which came almost in the same instant. The glass was broken and the huge, jagged iceberg with its pointed daggers, must have plunged through the opening and in one breath struck the girl senseless and lifeless. Why, pull yourself together old man — you're as white as chalk."

Well, that's all.

The rest of the story is too well known through the papers for me to tell it. The case of the State against Jared Johnson was dismissed. There was a great day when I said good-by to them all and came out into the daylight again — an innocent man.

But I'm not going to stay here. No. Too many people know me by sight and stare at me, and I can't bear to pass the old Fremont. Rosy and I are going back to Ohio; my brother has a farm there and I'm to help work it with him.

As for John Paul Hayne, I'm glad to say they've raised his salary on The Scoop. One of those sensational papers offered him a hundred dollars a week, but he wouldn't take it. He's a fine boy. He's promised to write to me every two weeks.

The Levitation of Jacob.*

BY CLIFFORD HOWARD.

AS I cast my eye over the advertising columns of the *Journal* I was attracted by the following notice, printed in small type and tucked away in an inconspicuous place:

HIRAM JACOB,
Post-office Box 975.
ANNIHILATOR OF THE UNDESIRABLE.

I am not naturally a person of much curiosity, but it seemed to me that there was something very unusual about this advertisement. It may not have impressed other readers in the same way, but it surely appealed to me as a most singular announcement. I could not rid my mind of it, and the more I thought of it the more curious I became.

But I never spend time in idle speculation. My policy is to get at the facts of a case. Accordingly, I clipped the advertisement and enclosed it in a note addressed to Hiram Jacob, asking him to furnish me with full particulars.

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $200 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

After waiting a day I received this answer, written on the typewriter in regular business form:

> My Dear Sir: — In reply to your favor of this date I beg to inform you that I am now prepared to fill orders for the extermination of human pests. Drunkards and worthless grandparents a specialty. Particular attention paid to the annihilation of personal enemies, money-borrowers, organ-grinders, mischievous gossips, miserly relatives and confirmed dyspeptics. In short, my business applies to all individuals who are a burden to society or whose existence interferes with the life, liberty or happiness of others.
>
> I am the discoverer and sole possessor of a method of annihilation that defies detection. It is instantaneous, clean, noiseless and absolutely certain. It leaves not a shadow of a trace behind. It is annihilation, pure and simple. This I guarantee. In the case of relatives it saves all bother and expense of funerals. This is an important item.
>
> My terms are $500 for each case, cash in advance. Twenty per cent. discount for two in a family if ordered at the same time. Orders executed within three days after receipt, or money refunded. Special yearly rates for the annihilation of tramps.
>
> My patrons assume no risk. Those who fear possibility of detection (though I guarantee there is none) need not reveal their identity. Simply write name and address of party to be exterminated and forward with bank note to
>
> Yours truly,
> Hiram Jacob,
> *Annihilator of the Undesirable.*

There was a straightforwardness about this letter which impressed me very favorably. The man was evidently sincere, notwithstanding that he was several generations in advance of his time. But I was particularly struck with what he said in reference to his method of business. The absolute annihilation of a body has always been regarded as a physical impossibility, yet here was a man who claimed to have discovered a means of accomplishing it and was ready to put it to practical use for the benefit of humanity.

As an investigator and a seeker after truth I felt it my duty to look into this matter more deeply. I have spent many thousands of dollars in scientific experiments and research, and the question of five hundred dollars offered but little objection to satisfying myself of the truth of this man's claim regarding his remarkable discovery. A more serious matter was the selection of somebody to be annihilated.

I had in mind quite a number of both men and women who would answer the purpose very satisfactorily. The difficulty lay

in making a choice. There were several whose sudden taking off I knew would prove a godsend to their relatives. In fact, I was myself possessed of an aged and unbalanced aunt, whose death was impatiently awaited by every member of the family.

She was a helpless invalid, totally deaf and almost blind, and subject to the peevish hallucination that the neighbors were spitting at her. Her lucid moments were devoted to wagging her head and mumbling grievously because she was not in heaven, where she had an idea she belonged.

Everybody said — and said it quite freely, too — that it would be a mercy if she died. But whenever she developed alarming symptoms which gave promise of her speedy termination, the doctor was hastily called and she was nursed back to life with much care and solicitude.

It was probably the same spirit which impelled us to do all we could to prolong her days of misery that now deterred me from selecting her for the hand of Jacob. Besides her I had two or three other relatives who, for one reason or another, would have been more agreeable in the graveyard than around the house, but I have a natural delicacy about tampering with relatives.

At the same time, to get rid of a member of the family would have served a purely personal end, and that was not my object in this matter. I desired simply to make a scientific investigation, aside from all family or selfish considerations, and I therefore determined to select some one whose annihilation would not only serve the cause of science, but at the same time be a benefit to society at large.

Accordingly, I picked out Bill Tizer. Bill Tizer was a notorious scamp — a hard drinker and a gambler; convicted of a number of minor offences and always suspected of larger ones; a charge on the community, utterly worthless, and a dangerous element of society. If ever there was a man unfit to live it was Bill Tizer, and I felt myself a public benefactor when I placed my order for him with the Annihilator of the Undesirable.

For the next two days after mailing the order I spent my time following Bill Tizer about town. It was important that I should be on hand when the annihilation took place, and as a consequence most of my time was given up to lounging about in saloons. It

was not altogether good for my reputation, but I have learned to sacrifice much for the sake of science, and when it was rumored that I had taken to drink and was seen prowling about Deadman's Alley in a state of intoxication, I accepted my fate with the meekness of a martyr.

The reward of my vigilance and self-sacrifice came at last. It was on the afternoon of the third day, and it may not be amiss to add that I shall never forget that day. It was shortly after three o'clock. I was crossing a street in the business section of the city, following in the tipsy footsteps of Bill Tizer, who was a few feet ahead of me. I was just in the act of reaching forward to pull him out of the way of a cart when a most astonishing thing occurred —

Bill Tizer suddenly vanished.

The hand that I had raised to take him by the shoulder fell upon empty air. Only an instant before he had been directly in front of me. I was looking right at him. Now he was gone as completely as if he had never existed.

The effect of his disappearance was like that of a gas jet that is suddenly extinguished — now you see it, now you don't. He simply went out of existence, instantly and completely, without a sign, without a trace of what had become of him.

Had I been the only witness of this marvel I should probably have doubted my senses; but what I had seen was confirmed by the driver of the cart, who was so overcome with fright that he gave vent to a series of unearthly yells, which not only served his horse as a pretext to run away, but attracted a large and inquisitive crowd.

The street at this point is paved with Belgian blocks. I examined the pavement carefully. It was firm and solid. There was no manhole, no sewer trap, no opening of any kind into which my victim might have fallen.

Neither could I discover the slightest trace of the man. There was no sign of blood, no scrap of clothing, no mark of any sort in the dust or on the stones — absolutely nothing to indicate the spot where he had disappeared or to show how he had passed out of existence. He was gone, body and soul.

There could be no doubt about it; I was the witness of a mar-

vellous phenomenon, a phenomenon in contradiction of all the laws of physics — the complete and total annihilation of matter. The demonstration was complete and beyond question; but the mystery of it was unfathomable.

The announcement that Bill Tizer was missing and that no clue to his whereabouts could be found attracted but little public interest. Despite the story of his disappearance as told by the drunken driver, it was taken for granted that he had tumbled into the river, and the police made no special effort to find him, nor did I deem it worth while to make any mention of my association with the affair. It was a case of good riddance to bad rubbish, and the public was satisfied to let it go at that.

But scarcely had the incident passed from mind, when the mystery connected with it was revived by another remarkable and mysterious disappearance. A retired banker, an old man by the name of Muldoon, suddenly disappeared one morning.

He had left his home to call at the house of a friend about two blocks away. Several persons distinctly remembered having passed him on the street, and one man testified that he had stopped and talked with him at the very doorstep of his friend's house. That was the last seen of him. He never reached his destination.

While the police and the public racked their startled brains for some solution of this extraordinary affair, I saw in it at once the mighty hand of the mysterious Jacob. Evidently he had secured another customer, for I had not considered it necessary to place a second order with him, as he had fully satisfied me of his ability as an annihilator. My chief desire now was to learn his secret; yet there was something so overwhelmingly wonderful and incomprehensible about it that I was at a loss to even conjecture his possible method of operation.

Then, about a week after the annihilation of the venerable Muldoon, the community was thrown into a state of bewilderment by the similar disappearance of an old lady. Her case was even more remarkable than either of the previous ones. She was an invalid (had been an invalid for fifty years), and was being wheeled slowly up and down the sunny side of the street near her home, when suddenly she and her entire outfit of chair, nurse and pet poodle vanished from the face of the earth.

It may readily be imagined that my science-loving soul was stirred to its depths by this demonstration of Jacob's miraculous force; and while, of course, I agreed with the community that it was a very unceremonious way for this time-worn lady to make her exit from the stage of life, I was too deeply impressed with the scientific aspect of the case to give much attention to the sentimental side of it.

But my feelings on the subject were very abruptly altered by a startling and most unexpected incident. I received the following letter from Hiram Jacob:

> DEAR SIR: — Your attentions to a certain young lady, whom it is unnecessary for me to mention by name, are the cause of much unhappiness to a fellow-mortal. On his behalf I warn you to completely sever your acquaintanceship with the said young lady on or before the 20th inst.

Now, I am not a man who is readily frightened; but the prospect of personally experiencing complete annihilation was by no means agreeable. There could be no doubt that that was the meaning of the letter. Some cowardly rival for the hand of Helen Baker had evidently placed an order for me with the inscrutable Jacob. Unfortunately, Miss Baker had so many admirers in addition to myself that I was at a loss to know which one to accuse of this villanous threat; nor was I in a financial position to wreak wholesale vengeance by placing an order for the annihilation of the entire lot.

At the same time, I did not propose to be bulldozed, and within an hour after the receipt of the letter I called on Miss Baker with an avowal which I had had in contemplation for some time past; and when I left I was calling her Helen, and we kissed one another good-night.

I mention this, not so much for the purpose of showing Miss Baker's preference for me above her numerous suitors, but to demonstrate that I am no coward.

I knew it would be both senseless and futile to call the attention of the police to Jacob's letter. It contained no real threat of violence; and were I to explain who the writer was, by declaring him to be the destroyer of Bill Tizer, it would be impossible to prove it. Besides, if by any possibility I could prove the assertion, it would necessarily involve me in the matter and I would be

adjudged as guilty as Jacob himself — perhaps more so — and that would mean the disgraceful termination of my days on the end of a rope. Between the two, I preferred clean, respectable annihilation.

As to giving up Helen, that was out of the question. I was engaged to her now, and I am particularly conscientious about keeping my engagements. My rival should see that I was not a man to be intimidated, and furthermore I was determined he should not succeed in his murderous design.

I made up my mind to find Hiram Jacob. I felt that if I could once get hold of him I could arrange matters to our mutual satisfaction as between brother scientists. Pride would not permit me to write to him, for I would not put myself in the attitude of pleading for mercy.

I had made several attempts before to locate him, for my curiosity had impelled me to seek from him an explanation of his marvellous secret, but all my efforts in that direction had been in vain. Beyond his post-office box he appeared to have no existence.

As the matter had now assumed a much more serious aspect I devoted my entire time and energy to his discovery. The date fixed for my extermination was but five days off. Three of these days I spent in the post-office, from early morning until late at night, keeping a watch on Box 975.

Despite my vigilance it was not until this much of my time had been consumed that I was able to discover who took the mail from this particular box. It was only then by the merest chance that I made the discovery. I happened to turn rather suddenly in my slow pacing up and down the lobby and caught a small boy in the act of taking a letter from No. 975. He unlocked and closed the box again so quickly that had I been fifteen seconds later I should have missed him.

Putting the letter in his pocket he left the building. I at once followed him, keeping him well in sight, but avoiding any appearance of tracking him. After a walk of several blocks he stopped at a letter box on a street corner. Taking the letter from his pocket he placed it in a large envelope and sealed it, and was in the act of mailing it when it slipped from his hand and fell to the

ground. Ere he could pick it up I saw the address, "Room 37, Dunton Building."

That was all. There was no name. But the clew was sufficient, and the next day found me knocking at No. 37, Dunton Building, bright and early in the morning. Six different times I called and pounded on the door and stamped about impatiently in the hall, but each time without success. Then the janitor told me that no one occupied the room. He said some one had rented it, but never used it; the only one who called was the postman, and he always dropped the letters through the opening in the door.

With the aid of a button-hook and several keys I succeeded in gaining an entrance to the room the next morning. This was the twentieth of the month, my last day of grace, and I took it for granted that desperate chances were permissible.

The room was without furniture and totally bare. On the floor lay two letters where the carrier had dropped them through the door. I had brought my lunch with me, for I was determined to remain until Mr. Jacob called for his letters. Notwithstanding the janitor's statement, it was plain that Jacob must sneak into the room some time during the day or night to get his mail. I also had my revolver with me, for contingencies.

Two or three hours passed, without a sound or sign of anybody. My vigil was becoming irksome. I sat on the window-sill, keeping one eye on the door and allowing the other to see as much as it could of the roofs and chimneys outside, by way of diversion.

Twelve o'clock came and I was still alone. I took my lunch from my pocket, and as I did so I happened to glance down at the floor. The letters that had been lying there close to the door had disappeared.

A creepy chill passed over me. No one had entered the room. I had fastened the bolt when I came in and the door was still bolted. There was no opening under the door through which the letters could have been extracted.

The situation was positively uncanny, and combined with the mystery of Jacob's existence and the realization of his fearful power, I do not think I can be blamed for feeling decidedly uncomfortable — not to say scared.

There are times when the bravest of men lose their nerve, when judgment and reason are thrown to the winds under the stress of sudden fear or excitement. I rushed from the room and out into the street. There was now but one chance for my life. Pride, love, happiness must be the sacrifice — but Helen would understand when I explained the terrible situation to her. The last day of my life was ebbing away, and Jacob, that dark angel of death, might take it into his head to call early.

When I reached the house I hesitated. My senses were coming back to me. Perhaps my hated rival was watching me, smiling with diabolical satisfaction at my weakness. I let my hand drop from the door-bell without ringing it. Pride and determination returned. I was myself once more — unconquered and undaunted. I turned and walked with a firm step toward my own home.

Arrived there, I wrote a long and most affectionate letter of farewell to Helen. I decided to send it by special delivery, in order that she might receive it before the news of my disappearance reached her. It would lessen the shock. As I read the missive over it brought tears to my eyes, it aroused in me an inexpressible sympathy for Helen in her impending bereavement. She would be deprived even of the consolation of putting flowers on my grave. There would be no grave, no remains, no funeral, no opportunity for a last expression of love.

I also wrote letters to several of my scientific friends, explaining my situation and asking them, in the name of science, to discover this man Jacob and force from him an explanation of what had become of me.

I was still writing, seated at a small table on the back veranda overlooking the garden, when I was interrupted by the appearance of a small, genial-faced man, about fifty years of age, who came up the steps, smiling most graciously.

"Pardon my interruption," he said politely, coming forward and shaking my hand with great cordiality. "My name is Jacob — Hiram Jacob."

Then, taking a seat directly opposite me at the table, he continued — smiling blandly all the while — "I have called a little earlier than I expected, as I have an engagement out of the city; and it has occurred to me that if you have come to a decision in

the matter about which I wrote you, it would be useless to put off till to-morrow that which can be done to-day. May I ask, therefore, what your decision is?"

"My decision is that I will not be bulldozed by anybody," I answered warmly, bringing my fist down on the table.

"Very well," he replied calmly. "That settles the matter at once. But before proceeding, I think I owe you an explanation, in view of my letter of the fifteenth."

"No explanations are necessary," I retorted. "I am fully aware of who you are, Mr. Jacob, and what you intend doing. I have myself employed your services."

"Ah, indeed," he answered. "Of course as all my correspondents are anonymous I cannot be expected to recognize old patrons. I trust you found my services satisfactory?"

"Not only satisfactory, but of the greatest interest," I replied, glad of a chance to gain time. "I am myself a scientist, and your discovery has aroused my most ardent curiosity and, I may add, my warmest admiration. And by the way," I added suddenly, "I am also much interested in the manner in which you obtain your mail from Room 37, Dunton Building."

I thought I would startle him, but he answered quietly: "In my room below No. 37, where I have an office in the name of Thomas Sullivan, I simply pull a cord that is attached to a hinged plank in the floor above, and the letters drop through an opening in the ceiling whenever I am ready to receive them. That's a very simple trick; don't you think it is?"

I told him I thought it was very simple indeed.

"I want to be perfectly frank with you," he went on, "for there is no reason why I should conceal anything from you. It flatters me to know that you are interested in my discovery, and I have no objection to explaining it to you, as one man of science to another, especially as you will yourself be the subject of a demonstration of it within the next few minutes."

"Will seven hundred and fifty dollars induce you to throw up the job?" I asked.

"Couldn't think of it for a moment, my dear sir," he answered, striking a match and lighting his cigar. "I have a reputation to sustain, and I have made it a rule never to permit anything to

interfere with carrying out an order. I can assure you, however, that it is painless, absolutely painless; and besides, you have the satisfaction of knowing that your annihilation means the happiness of a fellow-being."

"Then you mean to say that there is no possible means by which this murder can be avoided?" I asked, half rising in my chair with a determination to have first play in the game by shooting Mr. Jacob through the head.

"Tut, tut, my dear sir; you will gain nothing by such tactics as that," he answered, serenely, looking at me with half-closed eyes as he puffed the smoke from his smiling mouth. "I have merely to press the button you see on this instrument," he added, holding up to view the small, leather-covered box he had with him, "and the work is done in the twinkling of an eye."

I settled back in my chair. "And is your power of annihilation contained in that little, camera-like box?" I asked, forgetting in my curiosity the fate that was so near at hand.

"Just so," he responded; "just so. You have hit the nail on the head. I have simply to point the annihilator at my subject and push the button. Great invention, is it not?"

He turned the apparatus slowly around in his hands, while he fixed his gaze upon me with an expression of benevolent appreciation of my interest in the matter.

"In this instrument is stored the greatest power of the ages — the power of levitation. You look surprised; but the truth is, I have discovered a means of destroying gravitation — and behold, I have levitation, the antithesis of gravity! Many men have claimed this before and have duped the innocents by illusions and stories of floating bodies, men and furniture suspended in mid-air. But common sense should have told them that the destruction of gravity would not have such a result as that.

"What is it that holds us on the earth? It is the force of gravity, is it not? Of course it is. In this latitude the earth revolves on its axis at the rate of nearly a thousand miles an hour. Now, when I destroy in you the force of gravitation, you, as a man of science, know as well as I what will happen. The centrifugal force of the earth's revolution will shoot you off into space at the rate of sixteen miles a minute; so fast that the eye cannot follow

you. You will be out of sight in a twinkling. Now, that's as plain as the nose on your face — don't you think it is?"

I assured him that it was all very plain.

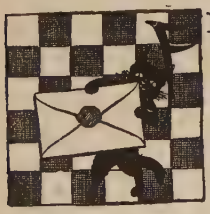
"As to what becomes of you," he went on, "is neither here nor there. So far as this earth is concerned, you will be annihilated. You will leave it with the force of a cannon-ball and nothing this side of the moon can stop you. You may perhaps land on the moon or you may go on to the sun, or you may continue to shoot through space, forever and a day. But these are questions that concern neither you nor — "

There was a crash; the table was violently upset, and Hiram Jacob was gone. A hole in the roof of the porch marked his exit from earth. He had accidently pushed the button while the machine was pointed toward himself; and as he had it in his hand at the time, it of course went with him, as did also the chair on which he was sitting.

After gathering together my scattered senses, by which time Mr. Jacob and my chair were fifty miles on their way to the stars, I picked up the table and quietly destroyed the letters I had written, and after a little while I called on Helen to talk over the plans for our wedding.

The White Brick.*

BY F. E. CHASE.



FIGG Street was one of those thoroughfares, so common in American cities, whose houses, all precisely alike, are ranged with military precision as if marshaled in battle array by their speculative builders against the army of wage earners for whose occupancy they were designed. Organization and discipline were strongly suggested by the uniform ranks of octagon-fronts, each capped with its formal mansard roof, and accoutred with its high flight of stone steps, and the effect of this suggestion was promptly confessed by their intimidated tenants, who paid an excessive rent with apprehensive alacrity. There were some in the neighborhood who, under a not uncommon stress of pecuniary circumstances, might have defied a solitary landlord in single combat, but to challenge the might of the brigaded proprietor whose capital had brought the street into being was beyond their courage. So the monthly tribute exacted by this besieging force of bricks and mortar was promptly yielded, and thus it came about that tenants stayed on in Figg Street, and

* This is one of two stories that took the second prize of $1,000 in THE BLACK CAT competition ending March 31, 1899.

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were penetrated with a strong sense of fellowship which quickly engendered a friendly intimacy.

I, like all of my neighbors, had moved in when the place was first built, lured by the odor of fresh paint and damp plaster, which is always so inscrutably attractive to the habitual rent-payer. Rumors of open plumbing and porcelain tubs had robbed the adjacent avenues of their choicest tenants, and in an incredibly short time after its establishment Figg Street had become fully populated, with the exception of one tenement. Number Seventeen, eight doors below the house I occupied, and upon the same side, was not immediately taken, and remained mysteriously untenanted for nearly a year.

This circumstance was strongly resented by a neighborhood which had testified so strongly by its impetuous conduct to the desirability of the street, the persistent emptiness of this refractory domicile serving as a kind of standing criticism of its hasty judgment. A kind of hauteur seemed to be expressed by its persistent refusal to come into proper relations with the other houses in the block, and by degrees it became distinctly unpopular. Too new to be plausibly accused of being haunted, it was vaguely slandered as possessing defective drainage, and became the subject of other injurious rumors which tended toward making the agent's placards in its lower windows permanent fixtures. And when, after a year's time, it became known that it had at length been let, all its accumulated unpopularity was promptly and unanimously transferred to its occupants as a matter of course.

These were an elderly man and his wife, who apparently had no family and kept no servant. Their few belongings had been moved in before it was even noticed that the place had found a tenant, which was in itself generally regarded as an aggravating circumstance. No one knew the man by name or could find out anything about him. It was strongly resented that from the beginning he kept the green blinds on both the front and the rear of his premises constantly closed, and when it became evident that he did not intend to put out a door-plate, popular feeling rose almost to indignation. He did not even permit himself to be seen very much, only occasionally going forth, while his wife was almost never visible. No one ever seemed to visit the couple,

whose only caller was an occasional expressman with a parcel. Attempts on the part of the male inhabitants of Figg Street to draw the man into conversation encountered a baffling resistance in his shy reticence of manner, while the few ladies who sought to penetrate the secret of the house through the cunning device of a neighborly call were quite unable to get any response to their repeated rings at the doorbell, though they were painfully conscious of being investigated from within through the blinds of the parlor window.

A fever of curiosity pervaded the neighborhood for a time. Social gatherings, assembled under a thin pretext of whist or music, straightway resolved themselves into deliberative bodies sitting upon the question of Number Seventeen. Certain persons even stooped to the employment of small boys as detectives, but these unworthy emissaries failed as completely as did everybody else to solve the mystery of the house. Finally the fever, having run its course, died out, and Number Seventeen came to be accepted as an objectionable but stubborn fact.

For nearly two months matters remained in this unsatisfactory condition, but at the end of that period the excitement was renewed by a very peculiar circumstance. Twice a day, on my way to business, I was obliged to pass these mysterious premises, which still strongly piqued my curiosity without ever having once gratified it ever so little. My interest in the house was just beginning to flag a little when one morning as I was going down to the office my always observant eye noticed a slight but startling change. A single white brick had taken the place of one of the common red ones in the sidewalk in front of Number Seventeen. It was precisely the size of an ordinary brick, and had a smooth, enameled surface of glittering white. I was quite sure that it had not been there the evening before when I came up town; so striking and unusual a detail could hardly have escaped my notice. I puzzled over the matter all day and devoted the evening meal to discussing it with my wife, but without arriving at any satisfactory conclusion. Going down town in the morning I spoke of it to a neighbor, and at night to two more with whom I rode up town. Three or four people called on us that evening to discuss this new phase of the mystery, and as they went home we saw

several small parties from the neighborhood walking up and down by this inexplicable object with an elaborate assumption of indifference, evidently engaged in verifying the strange report which had spread rapidly throughout the street.

For a week there was a revival of the original excitement, manifested by much hypocritical sociability. For a week the white brick was always trumps at whist, and was eaten over and over again in the form of Welsh rabbits of parallel indigestibility. Indeed, the formula of invitation during that period might very reasonably have been "The pleasure of your company is requested at a White Brick," had perfect candor obtained.

We were just beginning to get accustomed to the thing when one morning as I was going down town I missed it. I looked hastily up at the door. Yes, it was Number Seventeen without a doubt, but the white brick was gone.

I made a round of calls that evening with my wife and disseminated this startling information. As the bearers of this important news we enjoyed a quite unusual popularity, and went home in a very pleasant frame of mind. The third morning after, the white brick was again in its former place, the exchange having taken place, as before, some time during the night.

I was very absent-minded over my duties that day, and was more than once sharply reprimanded by my employer for my inattention to the routine of the office. If I had had a brick in my hat, as the slang phrase goes, I could not have been more hopelessly muddled than I was by the white brick which I could not get out of my head. This uncanny happening began to suggest to my mind all kinds of dreadful deeds of which it might be the sign and signal. Was Number Seventeen a den of counterfeiters, thus conclusively but silently indicated to interested persons? Was it a haunt of unspeakable vice, masked by the white purity of this symbol? Were deeds too dreadful to name, or an enterprise too criminal for utterance thus proclaimed? I passed the day in a fever of fruitless speculation and went home with but one clear purpose — to find out when and by whom this baleful message was placed and replaced.

To this end I determined upon an heroic measure. I remembered that the brick had been exposed the first time for precisely

one week. Now, if there were any uniformity in the purpose which lay behind it, it should be again removed on the following Tuesday night. I accordingly determined to sit up all of that night, on this chance, and watch. I passed the interval in a state of great nervous excitement, and upon the appointed evening established myself at my second story front window, which commanded a full view of that part of the sidewalk, with a plentiful supply of cigars, determined to solve the mystery. Sitting there in the darkness I heard the clocks strike eleven, twelve, one, two, three, four, and, I think, five. I fear I must have dozed for a moment, toward morning, however, for when daybreak surprised me at my vigil the confounded thing was gone.

Nearly two days after this it was replaced, remaining, as before, for a week, at the end of which time it again disappeared. All this period I spent in a miserable state of suspense, reading the criminal items which the enterprise of the daily press provided, and striving by the exercise of all my ingenuity to somehow connect the deeds or their doers with this ominous manifestation; but to no purpose. I had said nothing to any one about my futile experiment in detective work, but I was gratified to hear it whispered about that several of my neighbors had also sat up all night with a similar purpose and with similar results.

This had gone on for nearly two months when a brilliant idea came to me. Why on earth had it never occurred to me before? Nothing could be simpler or more promising, nothing surer to bring about something significant — something, at least, affording a clue to the mystery of Number Seventeen. That night I went out secretly at two A. M., in a drizzling rain, and, removing the white brick from the sidewalk where it had been placed two days before, set it in a corresponding position in front of my own door, putting in its place an ordinary red brick.

I slept very little the rest of that night, but, rising early, took up my position at the window to await results. In order to miss nothing I sent word to the office that I was at home with a severe sore throat — which was indeed quite true — and ate my breakfast uncomfortably as I sat at the window.

Nothing happened until eleven o'clock, when the elderly tenant of the suspected premises came out of his door and walked down

the steps. He had not got half-way down, however, when it became evident that he had discovered his loss. He paused in apparent consternation and after looking earnestly at the sidewalk for an instant, ran back with unaccustomed sprightliness into the house. Presently his wife came out with him, and together they carefully examined the footway where the brick had been. If ever two people appeared anxious and alarmed it was this guilty looking twain. All my old suspicions came back to me as I triumphantly beheld the manifest disquietude of the pair, who, after a brief search and a hurried consultation, went quickly back into the house, from which neither emerged again that day. The next morning another white brick had been planted in its usual position in front of Number Seventeen.

The exaggerated alarm which my experiment had caused in my mysterious neighbors made me a little uneasy as to the possible consequences of my act to myself, and, as nothing definite had resulted, I determined after a day or two, to remove the borrowed brick, which, being farther up the street than its owner ever had occasion to go, had remained unnoticed by him, though it had begun to cause amused comment among the neighbors. I had planned to do this upon a certain evening after dark, but on my return from the office that night I found my wife in a state of great doubt and anxiety over a large box which a teamster had left at our house just at dusk.

She had first noticed him driving down from the upper end of the street, looking inquiringly at the houses on our side. At the sight of our white brick he had pulled up suddenly, and taking from his cart a large box had rung our bell and delivered it to our servant without a word of explanation, and then had driven away. Our maid had received it as a matter of course, and there it lay upon the entry floor, marked emphatically upon its upper surface

THIS SIDE UP.
HANDLE WITH EXTREME CARE.

It was an ordinary rough packing case, three feet long by two wide and a foot deep, and was lettered in the bold script employed

by commercial packers. The corners of a tag which had evidently borne an address were still held down by four large tacks, but the greater part of the middle had evidently been torn off in the process of getting the box in at the door and could nowhere be found. There was no doubt at all in my wife's mind, nor in mine, that the case had been intended for our mysterious neighbor, and that the teamster had been led into this blunder in its delivery by our duplicate white brick, which was the first he would encounter in coming down the street from its upper end, and which he had become accustomed, by habit or instruction, to recognize as the sign of his destination. His mistake had, perhaps, placed in my hands the clue to the secret of Number Seventeen.

All my previous doubts and misgivings vanished in the face of this piece of providential good fortune, and sending for a hammer I prepared to have a look at the contents of the box. My wife's tremulous promptings to be careful and her scruples as to the propriety of such an act were evidently mere sops to her conscience, for she was inspired with quite as lively a curiosity as my own. The idea of any physical danger from an infernal machine never entered our heads, so entirely commonplace had been all the circumstances of the delivery of the case. So, adapting the usual loose-handled domestic hammer as well as possible to the unequal task, I finally succeeded in getting the lid off. Upon the folds of brown packing paper which covered its contents lay an envelope, blank and unaddressed.

From such a wrapper I felt no scruples about taking the note which it enclosed, and accordingly did so; but my wife spared me the shame of violating another person's letter by snatching it from my hand and reading it aloud. It ran as follows:

MR. JAMES MILLICAN,

Dear Sir: — The sample sent is a great improvement over the last one, and would, no doubt, be effective against the enemy. We must take no chances in this struggle, however, and when we show our hand it must be to deal a death blow to them. Therefore carry out the improvement you suggest. Do not worry about the cost — at this stage of the game money is nothing. The loss you speak of might be dangerous if the article fell into the right hands, but that is unlikely. We send the chemicals you ask for. Do not take any unnecessary risks. We must guard above all things against a premature explosion.

Yours truly,

SYLVESTER DAFT.

At the word "explosion" my wife turned pale and sat weakly down on the edge of a chair looking at me with a frightened face.

I, however, with a resolute air, but with many internal misgivings, laid hold of the paper which still covered the contents of the box, and prepared to strip it off. As I turned back the first layer the hammer which I had left upon the edge of the case fell to the floor with a crash, which served to show me conclusively the state of my own nerves. I persisted, however, in my unpacking, and presently laid bare the contents. The box was filled, apparently, with a fine white powder and nothing else. It was tasteless and gritty between the teeth, and bore every physical sign of harmlessness. I was greatly disappointed at this poor answer to my expectations and discontentedly plunged my hand into the yielding mass. As I did so my fingers encountered a hard object.

Carefully digging away the white powder I presently disclosed the neck of a large bottle, which I pulled carefully forth. The label bore a Latinized name, quite meaningless to me, but below it was the conspicuous legend: "Dangerous. Keep in a cool place." I complied at once by placing the bottle as far as possible from myself, and cautiously continued my search. There were four more bottles, containing different liquids, and several packages of unknown chemicals, including one of common borax, which I recognized with relief, as one meets a friend in a strange land. The removal of these articles left the case about half full of the powder and gave our front parlor, where they stood about, the appearance of a chemical laboratory. My wife and I could make little out of all this, and after having devoted the evening to vague and profitless discussion, we opened the windows of the room in compliance with the demand printed on the first bottle, and carefully locking the door went upstairs to bed.

But not to sleep. We tossed and turned for several hours, starting at every noise from below, until finally I could stand it no longer, and getting up again I dressed and went down stairs. All was quiet in the parlor, where the chemicals still stood intact. I sat down for an instant in an easy chair where I had them in full view, and there, of all places, fell fast asleep before I had any idea of such a thing.

When I awoke it was half past seven in the morning, and I was stiff with the cold that had poured in all night at the open windows, and had another frightful sore throat. I rose with pain and

difficulty to shut out the chilling draught, and as I stood at the open window commanding a view up the street toward Number Seventeen, I saw Mr. Millican, as I now knew him to be, coming in my direction, which I had never before seen him take. He was walking rapidly, his hands behind him, his eyes looking reflectively down upon the sidewalk.

A wave of apprehension crossed my mind. His route would take him past my house, where he had never, to my knowledge, passed before, and he would certainly see the stolen white brick. What would happen? Would he face me, or would he take alarm and flee? If he did face me, what should I do — resolutely pluck his secret from him in the interests of the public welfare, or consult my own personal safety in as plausible an explanation as I could devise?

Before I could decide he had reached my door. Without an instant's hesitation or the least appearance of surprise he turned and walked up my steps, taking something from his pocket as he did so. I heard a key rattle for an instant in the lock, which cheaply furnished article readily yielded to the intruder, and in another instant Mr. Millican walked into the room where I stood in frightened perplexity.

He looked first at me in great surprise, and then glancing hurriedly about him, his eyes fell upon the opened box. A look of utter consternation appeared on his face and he sat down in a frightened way upon the edge of the case, playing idly with the white powder with his hand, and looking at me with a baffled air.

Presently he cleared his throat.

"I see you are working on the same track," he said, in a dejected voice. "Well, I knew something was up when my experimental brick was stolen, but I'd no idea you were so near. How did you happen to locate here?"

The harmless dejection of his manner and appearance had already removed the worst of my suspicions, and I had decided to make the best explanation I could, but his opening puzzled me.

"I — I don't understand," I began.

"Then you are not Babelon's man," he cried eagerly, rising as he spoke. "You are not working for Babelon & Co. in this matter?"

I hastened to explain that I was not working for Babelon & Co. in any matter, but was in the insurance business; and then, taking advantage of the high good-humor with which this confession seemed to fill him, I made a very frank explanation of the whole matter, to which he listened with great amusement. I returned to him his white brick and the box of chemicals, and during the next two months was privileged to visit him in his laboratory which occupied the cellar of Number Seventeen, where I spent many pleasant evenings over a pipe in his interesting company. At the end of this period I received one morning this circular:

MILLICAN'S ENAMELED BRICK.

For Pavements, Warehouse Flooring and all Building Purposes Demanding

DURABILITY AND CLEANLINESS.

Indestructible by Wear or Fracture, Acid Proof and Hygienically Perfect. The only Flooring that can be Permanently Kept in a State of

CHEMICAL PURITY.

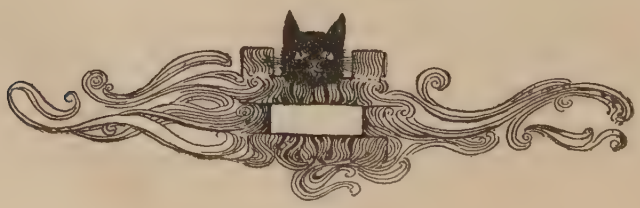
Patented June, 1899, by JAMES MILLICAN.

Manufactured by

SYLVESTER DAFT & CO.,

Dealers in Builders' Supplies and Hygienic Appliances.

Mr. Millican's brick had undergone the practical test of actual wear and tear in the sidewalk of Figg Street, to the consternation of its inhabitants, before it was offered to the public, and so was put upon the market in such a state of perfection as to defy all competition. At any rate, Messrs. Babelon & Co. never, to my knowledge, advertised the competing article which had forced upon Millican so much secrecy in his experiments.



When Time Turned.*

BY ETHEL WATTS MUMFORD.

I DROPPED in at my friend Dr. Lamison's rooms, for I had been dull and bored all day, and Lamison, partly by reason of his profession, partly because of his own odd humor and keen insight, is a delightful companion. To my disgust he was not alone, but deep in an animated discussion with an elderly gentleman of pleasant appearance. Being in no mood to talk to strangers I was about to make my excuses and retire, but Lamison signed to me to remain. "Let me present my friend Robertson, Mr. Gage," he said politely, as we both bowed with due formality. "Robertson," he continued, addressing me, "you will be interested in what this gentleman has to say on the Philippines — he has spent some years out there."

Mr. Gage smiled reminiscently. "Yes, I spent some little time in the Islands. In fact, I am just on the point of going there now, and am very sorry I shall not see them again."

"What?" I asked. "If you're going, why do you say you will never see the place again?"

Lamison broke in abruptly. "That is a long story. Let's go on with the question we had in hand. You were saying that the Malays are singularly shrewd and cunning."

Mr. Gage brightened visibly. "They are, indeed. Now, when I was in Manila," — and he launched into a highly instructive lecture on the Malay and all his works, talking rapidly and tersely; his phrases full of vigor and originality, his descriptions vivid and picturesque; in fact, it has rarely been my good fortune to listen to so brilliant a conversationalist — though conversation it could hardly be called, for by common consent he had the floor to himself.

Occasionally I asked a question, or Lamison punctuated the discourse with nods of approval as he flicked his cigar ashes on the floor. From the Philippines we wandered to the Chinese empire

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $125 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

and its destiny. Gage had spent two years in Tientsin and Hong Kong and was as well informed and interesting as man could be. His observation was phenomenal, and his memory likewise, and he had a way of presenting his facts that was positively evocative. I felt, after listening to him, that the recollections were my own, so distinctly did he force his mental pictures into my consciousness. He was eminently moderate in all his views, avoiding extremes and holding a mean of charity and common sense that is, to say the least, unusual.

A flash of lightning that stared suddenly through the windows, and was followed by a terrific thunder clap, made us start and pause. Mr. Gage arose and, going to the window, looked out into the murky night, remarking as he did so on the suddenness and violence of storms in the tropics.

I seized the occasion to nod to Lamison. "What a brilliant chap," I said. "I never heard a man express himself so well and sanely — who is he, anyway?"

"A gentleman and a scholar, also my guest for the present," my host answered. "So you think him well balanced?"

"Eminently so," I said heartily. "Not many men could state the facts of an international feud with such moderation."

Dr. Lamison smiled a strange, grave smile.

Our companion came back from the window whereon the heavy wash of the rain was now playing, and refilled his glass from the pitcher of shandygaff.

"So you are just on the point of making your first trip to the East?" Lamison asked, to my unutterable amazement.

Gage nodded. "Yes. In a few days I shall have decided."

I looked blankly at him.

"Then I suppose you will have your quarrel with the family by next week?" my friend went on.

Gage sighed deeply. "Yes, I shall have to go through with it again. Fortunately the worst stages come first, and I have been feeling the after effects for some days already."

Lamison looked at my confusion with amusement.

"Tell Robertson about it all, old man," he said. "He is perfectly trustworthy, and yours is such an interesting story. To begin with, tell him how old you are."

Gage laughed, a quick boyish chuckle, and sprang up gaily, stretching himself before the sparkling fire. "Just three and twenty," he answered hilariously.

I looked at him carefully. His iron-gray hair, the infinitesimal tracery of lines that covered his face and hands like a fine-spun web, and the slight stiffness of his joints, in spite of his quick and rather graceful movements, bespoke a man in the later fifties. I understood now. He was doubtless one of the curious cases of mania which the doctor was constantly picking up and studying.

"Tell him how it happened," Lamison suggested.

Gage's face grew grave. "It's very sad, part of it — but on the whole I have been blest above all men, for I have lived my life twice over. It was this way" — he sat down once more in the easy chair from which he had risen. "I was devotedly fond of my wife — one of the most charming women in the world, Mr. Robertson; but I lost her. She died, very suddenly, under singularly painful circumstances." His mouth twitched, but he controlled himself. "I was away on business in Washington when the news of her sudden illness reached me. I waited for nothing, but left by the first train. I remember giving ten dollars to the driver of the cab I hailed on my arrival, if he would reach my house in ten minutes. Aside from that the journey is only a blur of strain and horror. My memory becomes clear again with the moment when I saw my doorstep, wet and shining in the rain. I noted the reflected carriage lamp on the streaming pavement. The servant who opened the door at the sound of the stopping of my cab was crying. The house was brilliantly lit and I could hear hurried footsteps on the floor above and catch a glimpse of the blue-clad figure of a trained nurse. I rushed upstairs and into my wife's room. She raised one hand feebly toward me, and a flash of recognition lit up her face for an instant and then faded into waxen blankness. I can't describe that hour — it is too keenly terrible for me to repeat and it is not necessary to the story. At last it was all over, and her dear eyes closed forever, as I thought then. A great emptiness settled upon my brain and heart. Then came a slow tightening and straining sensation somewhere inside the dome of my skull, that seemed as fast as St. Peter's. A snap, sharp as a broken banjo string and perfectly audible, was its

climax. Then I steadied myself and looked about. Nothing had changed. The room was still, for the others had gone and we were left alone together — my wife and I. The silence was awful. Only the clock ticked louder and louder and louder till it beat like a drum. Then I glanced at the timepiece, an ordinary little porcelain thing that my wife kept by her on the medicine table, and a cold fear gripped me as I looked, for I realized that something wonderful and terrible was happening. With each tick the second hand jerked one second *backwards* — the hands were moving around the clock face from right to left. I started, and almost at the same instant I felt the hand I held in mine grow relaxed and warm. I gave a cry. The door opened. The nurse, who had been the last to leave the chamber of death, came in. I saw her do exactly what she had done before — but reversed. Then my sister backed in from the opposite side, exactly as she had walked out, and turning, showed me her tear-stained, convulsed face with the very movement with which she had left us. The others came in; it was a strange phenomenon. The doctor was there now, standing at the head of the bed. I looked at the clock. It was ticking and the hands slowly turning backwards. All at once I realized what had happened. Time had turned.

"I gasped when the thing dawned on me, it was so stupendous. But I saw my sweet wife's eyelids flutter, I saw her breath coming with difficulty, and I suffered once more with all my soul that terrible death agony. She turned toward me and lifted her hand with the gesture I had seen as I entered the room. In spite of myself I rose, and left her. I went down the stairs — the servant was there — I passed out into the street, to find the cab that had brought me standing before the door. I backed in. The horse trotted backward all the way to the station and I found myself on the train speeding backwards to the city I had left to come post haste to my darling's bedside.

"My reason shivered in my skull. If I could not sift this matter I knew I should go mad. The thing was strange past all endurance. So I sat in the train that was carrying me over the miles so recently covered, and considered. A dawn of delight came to me. It would not be so long before all this horror would have doubly passed. I would have to go to the hotel and receive

that terrifying, crushing telegram announcing Isabelle's illness once more. Then I should go over the business that had called me on to Washington, but after that I should go back to my wife to find her strong and well, to live over again the happy years of our married life, to watch her growing daily younger, while I grew young with her. What matter that little tiffs re-occurred — they were so few, and the joy of those years so infinitely great. And that, Mr. Robertson, is just what happened."

He went on, after a pause, in which he seemed lost in happy reverie. "In a week I had grown somewhat accustomed to doing over again the things I had done, only reversed; it seemed almost a matter of course; and, after all, I cared little, for I knew I was soon going to find Isabelle, to be greeted by her good-bye kiss, the same with which she had bid me Godspeed on the fatal journey. I could hardly hold my impatience as, at last, I backed up to the house, and when I saw her standing on the porch as I had last seen her, well and strong, dressed in the pretty gray cloth so becoming to her bright complexion and copper-colored hair, I could have cried with joy. She greeted me as I expected, with good-byes, but my heart sang with delight as we went into the house together. I put down my dress-suit case, and we ate luncheon together, beginning with dessert and ending with the delicate omelette she had prepared herself, in honor of my unusual freedom to lunch with her. We went over our old conversations. I was longing to tell her of my delight in her presence, of my gratitude for the extraordinary reversal of nature that gave her back to me, but I could not, I was under bondage of the past. I could only say what I had said, do what I had done.

"Luncheon over — or rather, correctly speaking, before it had begun — I bade her good-bye in my heart, but greeted her in my speech and went down to the treadmill round of my office work. My recent bereavement made me so tender of her presence, so hungry for the sight of her that my very soul longed to expand itself in loving words and acts; I yearned to do and say a thousand affectionate things, but I could only do as I had done. I began to appreciate how I had let our relations become commonplace, and I hated myself for it. I saw a thousand ways in which I could have made her happier, or spared her pain, yet I could not

take advantage of my new realization of my love of her. Ah, it takes such an experience as mine to make a man understand what he has missed and what he might have been. But even if I could not be to her what I so dearly longed to show myself, yet in my heart no gesture of hers went unnoted, no tone of her voice unloved. She delighted me wholly and completely, and the caresses that I gave her in seeming perfunctoriness, and the words seemingly mere habits of expression, were really the outlet of my soul's yearning to her. We were very happy. For years we were constantly together, and never was wife so appreciated. Then a great fear began to grip my heart. I remember it came suddenly, in the very midst of the little feast we were having to celebrate the first year of our wedded life — our 'first anniversary.' I realized that soon, in the very joy of our honeymoon I must anticipate our separation — the wedding would take place, next we would be engaged, then mere acquaintances, and after that — oh, desolation — it would be before I met her, and I should never see her again.

"I lived that year, our second honeymoon, and the last of our life together, torn between the joy of my returned happiness and the terrible knowledge of my coming loss. The wedding day came and I could have cried out in my agony, but I could give my pain no voice. I had no tears, only smiles and laughter that must be gone through with, though my heart was breaking. Imagine it if you can, sirs. Was ever a man so tried? Then came the period of our engagement, when I knew we were drifting slowly and surely apart — and the happiness and misery of that time was, perhaps, the hardest of all to bear, even worse than the actual slow separation, though after my declaration, when our relations were formal and distant, it broke my heart to see her, whom I had loved so long, treat me as a mere acquaintance; and with it was the awful knowledge that there was no future hope, no possibility of our meeting, on this earth at least. The poignant day of my first meeting with her arrived at last. I saw her, as I had seen her then, so many years before, lighting that conventional ballroom with her presence, a radiant vision, all gold and rose, her tall, graceful figure gowned in soft, filmy drapery. I saw her with all my heart and soul, with all the pent-up memories of my twice lived life, for I remembered it was the first, and

knew it was the last time I should see her. She vanished and I was left alone. For some time afterwards, although I was living over my cheerful, happy-go-lucky bachelor days, I was internally of a suicidal turn of mind, even on my return journeys in the East. I could not resign myself to losing this girl that, according to reversed time, I had never met. But youth is gay, and its recuperative powers strong, and I am growing steadily younger, you see. Then, too, other loves came and went, or rather went and came, and in spite of myself I am able to contemplate my double past with the buoyancy of my second youth. Yet it is all very strange, and recently unaccountable intervals have intruded into my life, such as this evening, for instance. You, gentlemen, are not a part of my boyish past, and yet you seem to be interpolated into my otherwise coherently backward existence. This has been happening for some time, and grows more marked. You may be dreams of my old life that I had forgotten, but I am at a loss to account for it fully. For instance — how could I have foretold then what the future had in store? and yet in one sense that is what I am doing now, in telling you my experience. You must admit that it is confusing."

Gage's story had fairly made me dizzy. I admitted that it was confusing. I hardly knew what to think. I even turned an anxious eye on the clock over the fireplace to assure myself that its hands still moved from left to right. As I faced it, Lamison regarded me with his amused but sympathetic eye.

"I hope to interpolate myself a great deal into your world, Gage," he said. "It's time you stopped in your mad career of growing younger. I don't want you on my hands when you become a troublesome stripling, or even when you have to unlearn your college education."

Gage laughed. "It will be rather hard, but I did enjoy my Harvard days, before I had that row with the family. Whew! How the old man did blow me up! And when I think I have to hear all that over again, it makes me sick." He paused again, and assisted his courage from the cheering pitcher. "Another thing that worries me," he went on, "is this: Have you noticed that, although all the happenings of my life seem to follow in well ordered reverse sequence, what I *say* does *not?* For instance,

by all rights I should repeat my sentences verbatim backwards. 'I am glad to see you,' in reversed language would be, 'You see to glad am I.' Now, in all my years of reversed experiences, although the order of conversation progresses backwards, the sentences themselves make perfect forward sense. This drives me to distraction."

The whole impossible proposition danced before me, but Lamison was evidently delighted.

"Good! Gage, splendid! You are making progress — your logic is returning. I am unspeakably glad."

Gage looked at him wonderingly. "Why should you? It is only more confusing. Ah, well, I should not be unhappy if it were not for the awful prospect of being a baby again. That revolts me, like becoming senile. It is such a horrible thing to become a squirming, senseless infant — it makes me shiver, it keeps me from sleeping, it is a menace too ugly and loathsome to be endured. Fancy it, gentlemen, the ignominy of it — the hideous helplessness."

"We'll find a way to prevent that," Lamison said soothingly. "You are better already. It won't be long before we set it all straight. Come, come, be a man —" for Gage suddenly flung himself on the table, his face buried in his hands, moaning slowly,

"I don't want to be a baby — I don't want to be a baby."

This exhibition was so pitiful that I turned to Lamison, almost with tears in my eyes. "Is there any hope for him?" I asked.

Lamison nodded. "Yes, he'll pull through. A condition brought on by overwork and the sudden death of his wife, of whom he was devotedly fond. You see how he is beginning to realize the discrepancies in his imaginary life. He will come out all right — in time."

Gage now had himself under control and sat up shamefacedly.

"Don't mind me, Mr. Robertson," he said. "I don't often break down this way, and I wouldn't have you imagine for one instant that I regret my life. I could not have asked a greater boon of Fate than those happy years restored to me, when time had turned."

He rose gravely, excused himself and left us, and we sat silent and deeply thoughtful, staring into the red embers of the fire.

The Family Skeleton's Wedding Journey.*

BY ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON.

NO matter what kind of a procession paraded the streets of Gentryville, one unique tailpiece always brought up the rear. As the music of the band died away in the distance, and the pomp of the pageant dwindled down to the last straggling end, necks about to be relieved of their long tension invariably turned for one more look. It was then that old Gid Wiggan drove by in his Wild-cat Liniment wagon, as unfailing as the Z that ends the alphabet.

Lank and stoop-shouldered, with a long, thin beard that reached his lap, and a high, bell-crowned hat pulled down to meet his flabby, protruding ears, he of himself was enough to provoke a laugh; but added to this he bore aloft on a pole the insignia that proclaimed his calling. It was a stuffed wild-cat, shelf-worn and weather-beaten, glaring with primeval fierceness with its one glass eye, and wearing a ridiculously meek expression on the side that had been bereft.

Across the ribs of the old black horse that drew the wagon was painted in white letters, "Wiggan's Wild-cat Liniment"; but as

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $125 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

if this were not advertisement enough, the proprietor sowed little hand-bills through the crowd, guaranteeing that the liniment (made from the fat of the animal) would cure any ache in the whole category of human ills. He had followed in the wake of the Gentryville processions so many years that he had come to be regarded as much a matter of course as the drum-major or the clown. Civic or military, the occasion made no difference. He followed a circus as impartially as he came after the troops reviewing before the Governor's stand, and he had been known to follow even one lone band-wagon through the town, on its mission of advertising a minstrel troupe.

There must have been something in the geography of the Wiggan family corresponding to a water-shed, else his course in life could not have differed so widely from his brother's. They had drifted as far apart as twin raindrops, fated to find an outlet in opposite seas. Indeed, so great was the difference that the daughters of the Hon. Joseph Churchill Wiggan (distinct accent on the last syllable when referring to them) scarcely felt it incumbent upon them to give his brother Gideon the title of uncle.

To Louise and Maud the proper accentuation of their family name was vital, since it seemed to put up a sort of bar between them and the grotesque liniment peddler. The townspeople always emphasized the first syllable in speaking of him.

The brothers had turned their backs upon each other, even in the building of their houses. While only an alley separated their stables in the rear, the Hon. Joseph's mansion looked out on a spacious avenue, and old Gid's cottage faced a dingy tenement street. He had his laboratory in the loft of his stable, from the windows of which he could overlook his brother's back premises.

Maud and Louise, regarding him and his business in the light of a family skeleton, ignored him as completely as a family skeleton can be ignored when it is of the kind that will not stay in its allotted closet. It seemed to meet them every time they opened their palatial front door. They could not turn a street corner without coming upon it. Only the ultra-sensitive young lady just home from the most select of fashionable schools can know the pangs that it cost Louise to see her family name staring at her in white letters from the bony sides of that old horse, in connection

with a patent medicine advertisement; and the faintest whiff of any volatile oil suggesting liniment was enough to elevate Maud's aristocratic nose to the highest degree of scorn and disgust. Once, years ago, when the girls were too young to be ashamed of their eccentric kinsman, they had visited his laboratory out of childish curiosity. He had given them peanuts from a pocket redolent with liniment, and had asked them to come again, but they had had no occasion to repeat the visit until after they were grown.

It was the night before Louise's wedding day. They had both finished dressing for the evening, but, not quite satisfied with her appearance, Louise still stood before the mirror. She was trying to decide how to wear one of the roses which she had just shaken out of the great bunch on her dressing table. Ordinarily she would not have hesitated, for there was nothing she could do or wear that would not be admired by this little Western town. It was the card accompanying the roses which made her pause — the correct, elegant little card, engraved simply, "Mr. Edward Van Harlem." It seemed to confront her with the critical stare of the most formal New York aristocracy, coldly questioning her ability to live up to it and its traditions.

That the Van Harlems had violently opposed their son's marrying outside their own select circle she well knew. His mother could not forgive him, but he was her idol, and she was following him to his marriage as she would have followed to his martyrdom. By this time she was probably in Gentryville, at the hotel. She had refused to meet Louise until the next day.

Louise laid the great, leafy-stemmed rose against the white dress she wore. It was a beautiful picture that her mirror showed her, and for an instant there was a certain proud lifting of the girlish head; a gesture not unworthy the haughty Mrs. Van Harlem herself. But the next moment a tender light shone in her eyes, as if some sudden memory had banished the thought of the Knickerbocker displeasure.

The maid had brought in the evening paper, and Maud, picking it up, began reading the headlines aloud. Louise scarcely heard her. When one's lover is coming before the little cuckoo in the clock has time to call out another hour, what possible interest can press dispatches hold?

She laid the velvety petals against her warm cheek, and then softly touched them to her lips. At that, her own reflection in the mirror seemed to look at her with such a conscious smile that she glanced over her shoulder to see if her sister had been a witness too. As she did so, Maud dropped the paper with a horrified groan.

"Oh, Louise!" she cried. "What shall we do? There's to be an industrial parade to-morrow morning, with dozens of floats. The line of march is directly past the Continental Hotel. What will Mrs. Van Harlem say when she sees Uncle Gid's wagon and our name in the Wiggan Wild-cat advertisement?"

Louise dropped weakly into a chair, echoing her sister's groan. The color had entirely left her face. She was more in awe of her patrician lover and his family than she had acknowledged, even to herself.

"Think of that awful, old moth-eaten wild-cat on a pole!" giggled Maud, hysterically.

"Think of Uncle Gid himself!" almost shrieked Louise. "It would kill me to have him pointed out to the Van Harlems as father's brother, and somebody will be sure to do it. There's always somebody mean enough to do such things."

Maud pushed aside the curtain and peered out into the June twilight, now so dim that the street lamps had begun to glimmer through the dusk.

"If we could only shut him up somewhere," she suggested. "Lock him down cellar — by accident — until after the parade, then he couldn't possibly disgrace us."

There was a long silence. Then Maud, dropping the curtain on the dusk of the outer world, turned from the window and came dancing back into the middle of the brightly lighted room.

"I've thought of a plan," she cried, jubilantly. "We can't do anything with Uncle Gid, but if the wild-cat and harness could be hidden until after the parade, that would keep him safely at home, hunting for them."

Louise caught at the suggestion eagerly, but immediately sank back with a despairing sigh. "It's of no use!" she exclaimed. "There's no one whom we could trust to send. If Uncle Gid should have the faintest suspicion of such a plot, there is nothing

too dreadful for him to attempt in retaliation. He'd just as lief bring up the rear of the wedding procession itself with that disreputable old beast on a pole, if he thought it would humble our pride."

As she spoke, she again caught sight of the little card that had come with the roses. It nerved her to sudden action. "I must go myself," she cried, desperately, springing up from her chair.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Maud, "you're surely joking. It's pitch dark in the stable by this time. Besides you might meet some one—"

"It's my only salvation," answered Louise, with an excited tremor in her voice. "Oh, you don't know the Van Harlems! Come on, Sis, and help me, that's a dear. It will be our last lark together."

"And our first one of this kind," answered Maud, drawing back. "Edward will be here in a few minutes, and—"

"All the more reason for us to hurry," interrupted Louise, taking a candle from the silver sconce on her dressing table, and snatching up some matches. "Come on!"

Carried away by her sister's impetuosity, Maud followed softly down the back stairs and across the tennis court. In their white dresses they glimmered through the dusk like ghosts. They were laughing under their breath when they started out, but as they crossed the dark alley they looked around nervously, and clutched each other like frightened schoolgirls.

Ten minutes later they were stealing up the back stairs again, carrying something between them wrapped in Maud's white petticoat. She had taken it off and wrapped it around the beast to avoid touching it. They had not been able to find a safe hiding place in the stable, and in sheer desperation had decided to carry it home with them for the night. A strong odor of liniment followed in their wake, for Louise, in her frantic haste, had upset a bottle all over the wild-cat, and liberally spattered herself with the pungent, oily mixture.

As they hurried up the stairs, the cook suddenly opened the door into the back hall, sending a stream of light across them from the kitchen. There was a look of amazement on her startled face as she recognized her young mistresses coming in the back way at

such an hour, but she was too well trained to say anything. She only sniffed questioningly as the strange smell reached her nostrils, then shut the door.

Just as the girls reached the head of the stairs there was a loud ring of the front door-bell. "Edward!" exclaimed Louise, helplessly letting her end of the bundle slip.

"Run and change your dress," said Maud. "You are all cobwebs and soot from dragging that harness into the coal-cellar. I'll attend to this."

Opening the door into a little trunk room at the end of the hall, she dragged her burden inside. An empty dress-box on the floor suggested an easy way of disposing of it. But when she had stuffed it in, still wrapped in the petticoat, not satisfied as to its secrecy, she opened an empty trunk and lifted the box into that. As she passed her sister's door Louise called her.

"Here!" she said, despairingly, holding out both hands. "We might as well give up. Smell!"

Maud's nose went up in air. "Liniment!" she exclaimed, solemnly. "Yes, it's fate. We can't get away from it."

"Edward will wonder what it is," said Louise, almost tearfully. "Oh, it seems as if he must surely know. There's no mistaking *that!*"

Maud poured some cologne on her handkerchief, and rubbed it briskly over her sister's fingers. "You look as frightened as Blue Beard's wife when she dropped the key in the bloody closet."

All through her dressing, Louise kept sniffing suspiciously at her dainty fingers, and even when she was ready to go downstairs, stopped at the door to look back, like a second Lady Macbeth.

"'Not all the odors of Araby can sweeten that little hand,'" she said in a tragic whisper, and Maud answered under her breath:

"'You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,
The scent of the roses will cling 'round it still.'"

A little later, Mrs. Wiggan's French maid, going into the trunk room with an armful of clothes, began packing the bride's dainty trousseau. The trunks to be used for that purpose had been pointed out to her that afternoon.

As she opened the first one, such a penetrating odor greeted her that she drew back.

"Maybe ze camphor ball," she exclaimed aloud, lifting a corner of the box which nearly filled the bottom of the trunk. "Ah yes! she went on, peeping in. "It ees mademoiselle's furs, what air protect from ze bugs by zat killing odair. It will presairve also ze woollens as well." Forthwith she began deftly packing a pile of snowy flannels around the box which held the family disgrace.

Twenty-four hours later, that trunk among a number of others was jogging along in a baggage car on its way to New York. It was checked to the pier from which the *Majestic* was to sail that week, and tagged, "For the hold."

. . . . . .

It was the first parade that old Gid Wiggan had missed in twenty years, but it was not his niece's plotting which hept him at home. He lay with closed eyes in his dark little bedroom, too ill to know that a procession was passing. The old man had come to a place where he could no longer follow at the heels of a cheerful crowd. He must branch off by himself now, and find his solitary way as best he could, over a strangely lonesome road.

"He's an old miser, but it won't do to let him die like a heathen," said one of the neighbors, when his condition was discovered. So there were watchers by his bedside when the end came. Carriages had been rolling back and forth all the evening, and at last the ponderous rumbling aroused him.

"What's that?" he asked, opening his eyes as the sound of wheels reached him. "Is the parade coming?"

"Only the carriages driving back from St. Paul's," was the answer. "There's a wedding there to-night."

Old Gid closed his eyes again. "I remember now," he said. "It's Joe's little girl, but I didn't get a bid. They're ashamed of their old uncle. Well, they'll never be bothered with him any more now, nor any of his belongings."

The watchers exchanged glances and repeated the remark afterwards to the curious neighbors who came to look at the old man as he lay in his coffin. He had long had the reputation of being a miser, and more than one hand that day was passed searchingly over some piece of battered furniture. It was a common belief on that street that his fortune was stuffed away in some of the threadbare cushions.

His will, which came to light soon after, directed that the rickety old house should be sold to pay the expenses of his last illness and burial, and to erect a monument over him. As if not content with humiliating his family in the flesh, he had ordered that it be cut in stone: "Here lies the manufacturer and proprietor of Wiggan's Wild-cat Liniment." The old horse, after taking the part of chief mourner at his funeral, was to be chloroformed.

Of kith and kindred there had been no mention until the last clause of the will, by which he left the meagre contents of his laboratory to a distant cousin in Arizona, whom he had never seen, but who bore the same name as himself, with the addition of a middle initial. This was the clause which turned Gentryville upside down:

"And I also give, devise and bequeath to the said Gideon J. Wiggan, my stuffed wild-cat, hoping that he will find in it the mascot that I have found."

The same letter which informed the Arizona cousin of his legacy told him that it had mysteriously disappeared. No money was found in the house, and the disappearance of the wild-cat strengthened the prevalent belief that old Gid had used it as a receptacle for his savings, and had hidden it with all a miser's craftiness.

A week later the Arizona cousin appeared, having come East to unearth the mystery and to meet the remaining members of the Wiggan family, who, he understood, were living in Gentryville. He was too late. Maud and her mother had closed the house immediately after the wedding, and started on a summer jaunt, presumably to Alaska. His letters and telegrams received no answer and he could not locate his relatives, despite his persistent efforts. The more he investigated, the more he became convinced that old Gid, alienated from his immediate family, had made him his heir on account of the name, and that a fair-sized fortune was stuffed away in the body of the missing wild-cat. A few leaves from a queerly kept old ledger confirmed this opinion. Most of them had been torn out, but judging from the ones he examined, the receipts from the liniment sales must have been far greater than people supposed.

He did not suspect his cousin Joseph's family being a party to

the disappearance, until some servants' gossip reached him. The cook gave him his first clue, when a dollar jogged her memory. She remembered having seen the young ladies slipping up the back stairs the night before the wedding, carrying something between them. The laundress had asked her the next day where the young ladies could have been to get their dresses so soiled in the evening. They were streaked with coal-soot and smelled strongly of the liniment that their uncle made. The French maid, who had not gone with her mistress, but had taken a temporary position with a dressmaker, recognized the odor when a bottle was brought to her. She swore that it was the same that mademoiselle's furs were filled with. She had smelled it first when she packed them in the trunk.

The evidence of the cook, the laundress and the maid was enough for Gideon J. Wiggan. He was a loud, rough man, without education, but so uniformly successful in all his business enterprises that he had come to have an unbounded conceit, and an unlimited faith in himself. "I never yet bit off any more than I could chew," he was fond of saying. "I'm a self-made man. I've never failed in anything yet. I'm my own lawyer and my own doctor, and now I'll be my own detective; and I'll worm this thing out, if I have to go to Europe to do it."

To Europe he finally went. The happy bridal couple, making a tour of the cathedral towns of England, little dreamed what an avenging Nemesis was following fast in the wake of their honeymoon. From Canterbury to York he followed them, from York to Chester. They had always just gone. Evidently they were trying to elude him. Once he almost had his hand upon them. It was in London. He had reached the Hotel Metropole only two hours after their departure. They had gone ostensibly to Paris, but had left no address. He ground his teeth when he discovered that fact. How was he to trace them further without the slightest clue and without the faintest knowledge of any foreign tongue? For the first time in his life he had to acknowledge himself baffled.

The next day, while he was making cautious inquiries at Scotland Yard, preparatory to engaging a first-class detective, he fell in with an old acquaintance, a man whom he had known in Ari-

zona, and who was employed in the detective service himself. He had been sent over on the trail of some counterfeiters, and seemed to have an inexhaustible fund of information about every wealthy American who had gone abroad that summer. Within half an hour the baffled Gideon had put his case into his hands, humbly acknowledging that for once in his life he had bitten off more than he could chew.

. . . . . .

Dinner was in progress in one of the most fashionable hotels of Paris. Edward Van Harlem, seated opposite his wife at one of the many little tables, looked around approvingly. His fastidious eyes saw nothing to criticise in the whole luxurious apartment, except perhaps the too cheerful expression of the man who served them. A more sphinx-like cast of countenance would have betokened better training. Then he looked critically at his wife. It may be that the elegant New Yorker was a trifle over particular, but he could find no fault here. She was the handsomest woman in the room. She was dressed for the opera, and the priceless Van Harlem pearls around her white throat were worthy of a duchess. She wore them with the air of one, too, he noticed admiringly. He had not realized that a little Western girl could be so regal. Ah! if his mother could only see her now!

"What is it, Louise?" he asked, seeing her give a slight start of surprise. "Those two men at the table behind you," she answered, almost in a whisper, for the service was so noiseless and the general conversation so subdued that she was afraid of being overheard. "They look so common and out of place in their rough travelling suits. They are the only persons in the room not in evening dress."

Van Harlem turned slightly and gave a supercilious glance behind him. "How did such plebeians ever get in here?" he said, frowning slightly. "I wish America would keep such specimens home. It's queer they should stumble into an exclusive place like this. I should think they would feel like fish out of water."

Louise tasted her soup, and then looked up again. One of the men was watching her like a hawk. His persistent gaze annoyed her, but there was a compelling force about it that made her steal another glance at him. His eyes held hers an instant in startled

fascination, then she dropped them with a sudden fear that made her cold and faint. The man bore a remarkable likeness to her Uncle Gideon. More than that, she had discovered some resemblance to her father in the determined chin and the way his hair rolled back from his forehead. That little droop of the lip was like her father's, too. Could it be that there was some remote tie between them and that the stranger was staring at her because he, too, saw a family likeness? She was afraid for her husband to turn around lest he should discover it also.

Ever since the arrival of the mails that morning, she had been in a state of nervous apprehension. Somebody had sent her a marked copy of the *Gentryville Times*, with an account of her uncle's will and the heir's vain search for his legacy. She had wanted to write immediately to Maud, and ask if she had remembered, in the confusion that followed the wedding, to restore the old man's property, but Edward had carried her away for a day's sight-seeing, and she had had no opportunity.

As she sat idly toying with her dinner, some intuition connected this man with her Uncle Gideon, and she was in a fever of impatience to get away, for fear he might obtrude himself on her husband's notice. When they had first swept into the dining-room, the Arizona cousin had leaned over the table until his face almost touched the detective's. "They're stunners! Ain't they?" he whispered. "Wonder if any of my money bought them pearls and gew-gaws. Well, this show's worth the box-seat prices we paid to get next to 'em. I wonder if the waiter would have promised to put us alongside if I'd offered him any less than a five-franc piece." Then, as Louise's eyes fell before his in embarrassment, he muttered, "She looks guilty, doesn't she! I'll bet my hat she suspicions what we're after."

The two men were only beginning their salad course, when Van Harlem beckoned a waiter and gave an order in French. "What did he say?" asked Wiggan, suspiciously. "I wish I could make out their beastly lingo."

"He sent to call a carriage, and to tell the maid to bring the lady's wraps. They're going to the opera."

"You mean they're going to give us the slip again! Come on! We must stop 'em!"

"Now, Gid, you just cool down," advised the detective, calmly. "I'm working this little game. It's a family affair and there's no use making a row in public. There's plenty of time." But his client had no ear for caution. The Van Harlems had risen, and were going slowly down the long drawing-room. All eyes followed the beautiful American girl and the aristocratic young fellow who carried himself like a lord. The mirror-lined walls flashed black the pleasing reflection from every side, and then replaced it with a most astonishing sight.

In and out between the little tables with their glitter of cut-glass and silver, dashed a common-looking fellow in a coarse plaid suit. Upsetting chairs, whisking table-cloths from their places, bumping into solemn waiters with their laden trays, he seemed oblivious to everything but the escaping couple. The detective had detained him as long as possible, and the couple had almost reached the door when he started in frantic pursuit. He reached them just as they stepped into the corridor. He tried to curb his trembling voice, but in his excitement it rang out to the farthest corner of the great apartment, high above the music of the violins, playing softly in a curtained alcove.

"You want your *what?*" demanded the elegant Van Harlem in a tone that would have frozen a less desperate man.

"I want that stuffed wild-cat," he roared, "that your wife's uncle left me in his will, and you made off with. I came all the way from America for it, and I'll have it now, or you'll go to jail, sure as my name is Gideon J. Wiggan."

Louise, already unnerved by her fears at dinner, and exhausted by the tiresome day of sight-seeing, started forward, deathly pale. It seemed to her that the man had shouted out her name so that all Paris must have heard. The disgrace had followed her even over seas.

She looked up piteously at her husband, and then fell fainting in his arms.

"The man's crazy," exclaimed Van Harlem, as he strode with her toward the elevator. "Here, waiter, call the police and have that lunatic put out of the house. He's dangerous."

It was only a moment until he had reached their rooms and had laid Louise gently on a couch, but as he turned to ring for the

maid, the two men confronted him on the threshold. The detective bolted the door, and the Arizona cousin took out his revolver.

"No, you don't ring that bell," he exclaimed, seeing Van Harlem move in the direction of the button; "nor you don't get out of here until you hand over that wild-cat. You've got it and your wife knows it. That's why she fainted. My friend here is a detective, and we're going through your things till we find it, for it's full of gold."

Van Harlem moved forward to wrest away the revolver, but the detective presented his. "No, you can't do that either," he said, quietly. "I'm going to see that my friend gets his rights."

With the helpless feeling that he was in the hands of two madmen, Van Harlem stood by while trunk after trunk was overhauled, and the trousseau scattered all over the room. The one containing the flannels had not been unlocked since it left Gentryville. It was the last to be examined.

Louise opened her eyes with a little shriek as a familiar odor penetrated to her consciousness. They had unearthed the family skeleton. "*Louise!*" cried her husband as the old moth-eaten animal was dragged from under her dainty lingerie. "What under *heaven* does this mean?" Another fainting spell was her only answer, and the one yellow glass eye leered up at him, as if defying the whole Van Harlem pedigree.

A minute later a stream of saw-dust oozed out from the beast's body, covering the piles of be-ribboned lace and linen, scattered all over the velvet carpet. Then a limp, shapeless skin with its one yellow eye still glaring, was kicked across the room. The Arizona cousin had no further use for it. He had come into his inheritance.

He walked across the room and gave the moth-eaten skin another kick. Then, with an oath, he handed his friend a slip of paper which he had found inside. Written across it in faded purple ink were three straggling lines. It was the formula for making the famous "Wiggan's Wild-cat Liniment."

Missing.*

BY MARY BOARDMAN SHELDON.

IT is good to travel far, and to come upon strange sights at the end of one's journey. This he who has tried it knows, and he who has not speaks without authority. But it is also good to come again to the heart-known spots of earth, and to find them still as one has had them in his thoughts. When one wants new things, it is best to go to new places for them.

There is a farm that I know of — about six miles from any railroad — and the owners thereof are my friends. I went there at first as a boarder, my occupancy of a room in the house and a seat at the table meaning so many dollars a week to the farmer and his wife, and meaning nothing more. When I stay there now, although the dollars are passed from hand to hand every seven days, as before, they long ago ceased to hold any significant relation to my position in the family. There may be those who will not credit this statement, but it is true.

After the lapse of a year and a half, I travelled again over the old trail, recognizing as I came the landmarks that had blazed the way for me on my first adventure to the place. At a little station in the woods I got out of the train, and there, on the platform, I found the farmer — his name is Hiram Tibbals — waiting for me with outstretched hand. We drove through the orange light and the purple shadows of the late summer afternoon, towards the farm, six miles away. I leaned back in the buggy, utterly content, too satisfied to talk. Mr. Tibbals held the reins in his left hand; his right lay on his knee. He drove with the easy mastery of long habit, with a careless caution that I remembered, and which now, in its recognized familiarity, added to my peace and blessed-

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $100 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

ness. Everything was as it had been the first time I had come that way, and as I had found it on every return that I had made, and in this fact lay my happiness.

Only once, as we drove, was the deep-breathed silence broken:

"Looks natural?" Mr. Tibbals said, with the rising inflection.

"Very!" was all I answered him.

Just before we came to a village, two miles beyond which lay the farm, we passed a little cemetery. As we drove by, Tibbals leaned towards it from the buggy, half raised his hand in gesture, as if to point out something, dropped it, and turned to me. I waited for him to speak, but after an instant he looked away, settled back in his seat, and we went on in a silence that lasted until we reached the farm.

We came at dusk to the old, white house, and Mrs. Tibbals met me on the threshold. With her I went in, across the hall, and into the familiar sitting-room, while Mr. Tibbals drove away to the barn. Later, we three had tea, by lamplight, in the dining-room that I remembered so well. Then we went out, and sat on the long, low porch — Mrs. Tibbals in a little red rocker, the farmer and I with our chairs uptilted, our feet on the railing, our pipes in our mouths. Presently Mr. Tibbals repeated exactly the inquiry he had made on our drive from the station.

"Seems natural?" he questioned me again.

My content had taken another mood, and I responded this time with audible enthusiasm.

"Natural? *Yes!*" I testified happily. And then I enlarged upon this. "It's hard to believe that I've been away. Nothing is changed — nothing. It's all as I left it."

Mr. Tibbals twisted a little in his chair, and looked over at his wife. The slow, regular sound of the red rocker on the wood of the porch ceased. As the farmer took the pipe from his mouth and cleared his throat, I some way knew that the silence of our afternoon drive had been significant, and that it was now to be broken.

"There's been one change since you was here," Tibbals asserted at length.

"Has there?" I queried. Then I added, interestedly, "What is it?"

"We've calcerlated to tell you." It was the wife who answered me, speaking in that sincere way of hers that makes a man feel that she is trusting him with something. "If so be 'at you'd like to hear, we'd be glad to have you know about it."

"Of course I should like to hear," I told her, cordially and truthfully; but there were some moments of silence before either of them spoke again. At last Mr. Tibbals said, tentatively:

"I expect you don't remember much about the war?"

"The war!" I repeated in surprise, my thoughts flashing to San Juan and Manila Bay. "What war?"

"Oh," he answered, quickly, "not the war you're thinkin' of — not that; I mean the war of '61 — that I expect was over before you was old enough to know the awfulness of it, or to have it hurt you, anyways."

As I was born on the day that Lincoln was assassinated, it was quite true that my knowledge of the Rebellion is mostly second hand, and I admitted the fact.

"Yes," said Tibbals, nodding his head; "yes, I presumed you must be some'ers about that old. Well," — here he took his feet down from the railing, and turned his chair, so that he faced his wife — "well, it ain't been so with us. We lived through them times, Mary an' me, an' I guess we couldn't forgit 'em if we tried."

"But you were not at the front, yourself?" I said, enquiringly. I was sure he had told me that he had lived all his life on that farm.

"No," Mrs. Tibbals answered, confirming my impression; "Hiram, he didn't go himself. I — our little baby — he couldn't go." She hesitated a moment. "That's what we've got to tell you. It's about — about him that went in Hiram's place."

"A substitute?" I questioned.

Mrs. Tibbals looked over at her husband, and he repeated my words in the tone of one who reverently gives another his just title.

"'A substitute' — yes, that's what Jim was — jest that — my substitute. He went instid of me."

Then I waited, while the locusts whirred outside and our pipes glowed in the shadow of the deep veranda. There was a story to come, I knew, and I listened for the words which were to bring it to me.

They came at length from Mr. Tibbals. "We wasn't married when the war broke out," he began to narrate, "though we'd been thinkin' about it for some considerable time. I was here, with mother, an' we'd both been glad enough to 've had Mary come; but she was livin' with her father in the village, an' she wouldn't leave him. Then, 'long in the summer of '61, he died, an' left Mary alone, an' the next fall we was married. Mother, she set great store by Mary. She used to say she didn't know why it was 't mother-in-laws an' daughter-in-laws didn't generally git along — she guessed if every daughter-in-law was like Mary, they would. "Well, mother lived till our baby girl was four months old. I'm thankful she did, for such comfort as she'd used to take with the little thing — there never was such a child, seemingly. Mary an' me, we thought so, too."

He stopped, and Mrs. Tibbals said, in a hushed voice, musingly:

"She had the prettiest hair I ever see — all soft-like, round her face. An' such cunnin', baby ways."

I tried to say something, but could think of no adequate word. Then presently the farmer went on speaking:

"It didn't last long — for mother — an' only a little longer for us. Mother died when we wasn't thinkin' of such a thing, very sudden, leavin' the baby, an' leavin' us. An' jest then — not more'n a month after that, it wa'n't — I was drafted. Mary — " He turned to his wife, as if appealing to her to tell the story.

"You was afraid to tell me," Mrs. Tibbals recalled. "You come back from the village, an' I see somethin' was the matter, but you wouldn't tell. An' then Jim come in — "

"Then Jim he come in," — the farmer took up the tale. "He'd heard at the store, an' he come right down, an' not knowin' I hadn't had the courage to tell Mary, he said right out: 'Look here, Hi, you're not goin'.' Mary, she says, 'Goin' where?' She was scared, though not knowin' why. I tried to hush Jim up, but Mary, she'd seen there was somethin' the matter, an' nothin' would do but I'd got to tell. Well, I thought then she was goin' to drop, she got so white; but Jim he spoke up quick, an' he says 'I tell you, you're not goin'. Don't look like that, Mary — for God's sake, don't! He ain't goin', do you hear? *I'm* goin'!' Then it came out as Jim had gone an' offered himself as my sub-

stitute, an' he was goin' instid of me. An' we both knowed why he done it. 'T wa'n't for *my* sake, though Jim an' me was always good friends enough. I knowed — though Mary never let on, an' Jim hadn't — that Jim — "

The rocking chair had not been in motion for some seconds, and at this point Mrs. Tibbals broke into the narrative.

"There, Hiram," she declared, "there's no call for you to say nothin' about that."

"About what, Mrs. Tibbals?" I enquired, with what I could not keep from being an overdone air of innocence.

The lady gave me no answer at all, and her husband went back, like Humpty Dumpty, to the last remark but one:

"All right, Mary, all right," he chuckled. "I guess I don't need to say nothin' more." But almost immediately the smile left his face, and his voice took on a deeper, graver tone, as he continued:

"But this I *will* say — it ain't in many men to do what Jim done. I'll swear it ain't in *me*. Talk about dyin' for a woman — an' there's more talkin' done than dyin', by a long sight — a man can do it, mebbe, if the girl he loves loves him. He can do it because her lovin' him has made him somehow more an' different from what he was before. But Jim — well — he jest give up *his* life because the woman he wanted loved another man than him, an' she'd 've suffered — her an' her little child — if I — if the other man — had went away to war."

The old farmer's clenched fist came down with force on the broad arm of his chair, and he threw back his head with a gesture of strong feeling. As for me, by some association of ideas there flashed before my mind a day when I, a boy of eight, went for the first time down the Potomac, past Mt. Vernon. The boat's bell had tolled, I had seen my father take off his hat and stand with bared head, and, only half knowing why, I had followed his example.

"That's what Jim done," the farmer's voice went on. "That's jest what Jim done, an' there ain't a monyment made that's too good for him. That's so, ain't it?" he asked, turning to me.

"Was your friend killed in battle?" I questioned him, not quite comprehending.

"Strange is the heart of man." With all the respectful sympathy which I certainly felt for the tale and its tellers, my brain, at this moment, automatically presented to my consciousness the words, "This would make a good play." I had nothing whatever to do with the formation of the idea; it simply leaped upon me, then was gone. At the same instant I was listening for the farmer's answer to my question, but his reply was intercepted by Mrs. Tibbals:

"Why don't you tell it out, Hiram?" she criticized. "He don't know what you're gettin' at."

"H'm'm," responded Mr. Tibbals. "Well," — turning to me, as he answered my question,— "that's what we've never knowed, whether Jim was killed in battle or not. Most likely he was, but we ain't never ben sure. We heard from him quite a few times after he went. He was gettin' on all right, he said, an' in the fights he was in nothing seemed to touch him. Then come Gettysburg. I brought home a paper, an' we looked for some word of Jim, as we always done, an' this time it was there. It stood out plain, as if there wa'n't nothin' else that side of the paper: — '*Missin': James Mallen.*' An' I think," the farmer testified, in the tone of one to whom experience has given insight, "I think there's nothin' harder nor worse for a man's friends to bear than that — jest *missin'!* There's nothin' you can take hold on. You jest set down, an' you wait. You have all the hurt of losin' of him, an' yet you have a tormentin' hope that mebbe he ain't gone, an' you'll hear somethin'. Well, we waited, but nothin' ever come of it — we never heard a word. I knowed in my heart Jim was dead, an' Mary knowed it, too, but she kep' tellin' herself, and tellin' me that she thought he'd come back — tryin' to deceive both on us, but not succeedin', exactly. She kep' it up, though, till it come Memorial Day, and they was puttin' flags an' flowers on the soldiers' graves, down to the buryin' ground. We rode past there, that mornin', an' we seen 'em doin' of it, an' quick as winkin', Mary says to me, says she, 'Where's Jim's flags? Where's his flowers? He'd ought to have 'em if anybody in creation'd ought," she says.

"'There ain't no grave for Jim,' I says. 'We don't know as Jim's dead.'

"With that, Mary, she begun to cry, an' she says, sort er chokin', an' sort er mad, 'Jim's dead, Hiram Tibbals, an' you know it, as well's I do!'

"Women is queer," commented the farmer, at this point.

"Well —" with a deep breath, "so that's the way it come that we got our minds set on havin' a monyment for Jim, an' a grave, even if he didn't lay in it. We wanted him to have all 't the dead soldiers had, an' more, if we could fetch it. We begun right away to put aside for a stone. It would take about one hundred dollars, we calcerlated, for we didn't want nothin' poor. We figured we could do it in a year, if we had good luck — or mebbe two. '*Say* two,' I says to Mary, 'an' there'll be no disappointments.' *Two!* Oh, Lord! It's ben thirty-five!"

"What!" I cried, incredulously. "You've been thirty-five years saving one hundred dollars? Nearly all your married life!"

Neither husband nor wife answered me for a moment, then:

"Tell him, father," Mrs. Tibbals commanded softly.

"No," the farmer corrected me; "no, it ain't exactly like that. You see there's ben setbacks, as you might say. The money's ben ready, or most ready, time an' again, an' then it's had to go. There was a fire, first; lightnin' struck the lower barns, after a dry spell an' what got burnt up in an hour took us near two years to get back again. An' after that — well — there come a time when there wa'n't no thought of savin'. Little Ruth — our little baby girl, we called her, though she was five, an' over — she begun to pine. God only knows how we tried to save her. There wasn't nothin' we didn't do. We spent all we had, an' we borrowed on the farm, but then! — 'twa'n't no use. Mebbe you've read a poem them times always puts me in mind of? 'Baby Bell,' the name is."

I nodded, looking straight before me into the moonlight.

"I thought likely you had. As far as that goes, I guess it was in one of them books of yours I seen it:

> 'At last he came, the messenger,
> The messenger from unseen lands.'

It was like that. She went, all we could do — we just stood by an' let her go, an' put her little body into the buryin' ground. You've seen her grave."

"Yes," I assented, a little hesitatingly. I knew the Tibbals lot in the cemetery, for the farmer's father and mother were buried there, with their names cut on stones at the foot of the graves. Also I had often remarked a little mound by the side of the others, but with no monument of any kind. I knew, for Mrs. Tibbals had told me, that the little Ruth was buried there, and I had often wondered that no stone marked the spot — no tablet, with the child's name or the dates of her short life. This was in my mind now, when Mr. Tibbals said, as if in answer:

"There ain't no monyment. We ain't never been able to have one. After we'd buried our baby, we talked it over, Mary and me, an' we settled it that if we ever got money to buy a stone, Jim had ought to have it. 'Little Ruth, she'll understand,' Mary says, 'she'll know — up in heaven.' It's been hard — not havin' no mark on the little grave — it would've been a comfort. But I'm glad we done the way we have, an' so is Mary."

He turned to the wife, and she met his look. She made no response, but none was necessary. I saw that the childless years had drawn these two into a relation that was perfect.

"We got the debts paid, at last, after a long spell of workin' an' savin', an' then we begun to lay by again. Things went well for quite some time, an' we'd saved considerable, and was thinkin' mebbe the time had come. An' jest then it was that the Widder Brown's boy went wrong. It come to me to know about it, an' there wa'n't nobody but me to save him, and to keep his mother from hearin' of it. She'd ben good to Mary, an' comfortin', when our baby went, an' — well — I jest couldn't face her, and tell her what her boy had done. There wa'n't much time to think it over — if Sam was going to be saved, it had to be done quick. So I told Mary the whole story, an' I says, 'What am I going to do?' Mary, she didn't have to consider long. It was Jim's money that was in both our minds, of course, an' she says, 'Hiram, the livin' had ought to come before the dead. Jim is where he don't sorrer at having no monyment, but the Widder Brown — Oh, father,' she says, coverin' her eyes — 'she loves that boy the way I did my baby!' There wa'n't no need to say any more. I took Jim's money, an' went out, an' paid Sam's debt, an' his mother never knowed. She died about two years back.

"An' so it's ben — one set-back after another — an' it's seemed as if t'wa'n't meant as Jim was to have that monyment. I was laid up for one spell, an' we got behind again, but I come around all right, an' started in again. An' — well — that's all. It's done now, an' I'm glad on't, for if 'twa'n't, I dunno's it ever would be. We got the stone set up before Memorial Day, last spring, an' there was flowers for Jim — an' a flag."

He raised his arms over his head with a gesture full of weariness. "I'm tired," he confessed, "an' I guess Mary is. We're gettin' old now, both on us, an' we can't do jest what we could."

It was in the bright sunlight of the morrow that I saw in the little cemetery the plain white shaft with the words:

IN MEMORY OF

JAMES MALLEN

Born January 5, 1838
Missing Since July 3, 1863

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends

But through the brightness of the noontide I could see again in the white lustre of the August moonlight the expression on the faces of my friends — the look of peace after conflict, rest after striving, and the joy of consummation following the pain and restlessness of hope long deferred.